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REPRESENTATIONS OF THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY: Irish Newspapers' Discourses on a Key Policy Idea

Brian Trench

Introduction

FROM TIME TO TIME, notions take hold in society in such a way that they become reference ideas across diverse social sectors, and terms associated with these reference ideas proliferate in public discourses and media of various kinds. This is notably true for the 'knowledge economy' and 'knowledge society'; these terms have largely displaced other terms to describe the particular character of advanced economies and societies in the early 21st century. Other terms have struggled to co-exist: 'information society' seems passé; 'services society', 'audit society' and 'risk society' are marginal or niche terms; 'innovation society' has had intermittent periods of prominence.

The main purpose of this paper is to examine how 'knowledge society' and related terms have been adopted and adapted in media discourses. Much media work involves the processing of vocabulary, phrases and concepts that originate in restricted intellectual and cultural domains, making this language accessible to wider audiences. In this way, journalism can be said to be often intertextual or interdiscursive (Fairclough, 1995): depending on the subject matter, it may bring together the language of everyday with, say, the language of technology or economics. In some cases, the seams between these languages or discourses may be very visible; in other cases, they may disappear over time. Strong examples of the latter can be found in media coverage of the environment where terms originating in environmental science have been assimilated into the vernacular – climate change, global warming, carbon footprint, and so on. Marks of their assimilation are the use of these terms without attached explanations, their use in what we might call the natural language of journalism, and their use in contexts other than the formal reporting of developments in environmental science.

Before engaging with the detail of how such discursive engagements have worked out in relation to 'knowledge society', it seems necessary first to sketch some of the history of this concept in academic and policy discourses. This brief examination will demonstrate that the concept emerged into wider usage with many qualifications and interrogations surrounding it. Against this background, it becomes interesting to see how media – in this case, Irish-published newspapers – take account of the uncertainties around the meaning of the phrase.

Shifting Terms of Policy Debates

It is little over a decade since the concept of 'the information society' and a policy focus on 'innovation' were holding all the attention now accorded to 'the knowledge

society'. In 1996, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 1996) helped shift the attention of governments and inter-governmental institutions to the demands of the knowledge-based economy. In 2000, the EU adopted the Lisbon declaration committing itself to become 'the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world' by 2010. That phrase has been very frequently cited in policy statements of the EU and its member states throughout the present decade.

The concept of the knowledge society derived very largely from the discussion of knowledge management in enterprises. Peter Drucker, the influential management theorist, is widely credited with the major role in establishing the concepts of knowledge workers, knowledge management and knowledge company. Drucker and many who followed him drew attention to the increased contribution to businesses of information processing and technologies, in particular to their role in replacing certain categories of manual and routine labour. But the argument was also extended to national economies, and to the increasing weight within developed economies of industries and services based on processing information or knowledge, sometimes called the knowledge sector. In the late 1960s Drucker (1969) anticipated that the knowledge sector in the United States would account for one half of total national product, and declared, 'we have changed into a knowledge economy'. Thurow (1996) followed up by stressing the competitive potential and central role of knowledge: 'Today knowledge and skills now stand alone as the only source of comparative advantage. They have become the key ingredient in the late twentieth century's location of economic activity.'

The elision from enterprise to economy carries with it the implication that the diversity of activities, values and needs of often complex societies can be reduced to those of production and business management. This elision takes a particular form in Ireland, where policy-makers frequently refer to Ireland Inc. to encompass the whole society and to stress the perceived need to reorient social sectors to the demands of economic development. This has been seen in educational policy development: in the 1970s, new institutions, agencies and curricula were established in Ireland to ensure adequate supply of technical personnel to run and service processes in high-technology industries; in the 2000s, the focus shifted to 'fourth level' education of professionals capable of imagining and developing new products and processes in science-based industries.

As information and communication technologies were applied to transform old industries and services such as vehicle manufacture and logistics and create new ones such as applications software development and online transactional services, the British government applied the emerging theories of the knowledge economy in its white paper, *Our Competitive Future – Building the Knowledge Driven Economy* (Department of Trade and Industry, 1998). The New Zealand government's Information Technology Advisory Group (1998) asserted that more than half of GDP in the major OECD economies was based on the production and distribution of knowledge, and it cited the growth of the Internet and other related new technologies, commitment to education and life-long learning, and heavy investment in research and development as factors that positioned certain countries well to take advantage of new global markets. 'Australia, Finland, Ireland, Canada, Singapore, and the United States are countries which have embraced the knowledge economy (some still

with a strong commodity sector), and are experiencing strong GDP growth as a result.' Also in 1998, the World Bank stated baldly:

For countries in the vanguard of the world economy, the balance between knowledge and resources has shifted so far towards the former that knowledge has become perhaps the most important factor determining the standard of living. ... Today's most technologically advanced economies are truly knowledge-based (World Bank, 1998: 16)

These few examples already illustrate some aspects of the policy discourses of the knowledge economy that have been consistent over the intervening years – the emphases on competition, the merging of economy and enterprise, the link with communication technologies, the centrality of education and research. Talk of the knowledge economy has gathered momentum, barely restrained – at least until very recently – by the continuing instability in the meaning of the term, and the uncertainty of the empirical evidence supposedly supporting its use as description.

On this, Rohrbach (2001) noted, somewhat awkwardly, 'the frequency of the term, given its alleged scope of application – it should in fact be applicable to all modern societies – is disproportionate to the clarity of its measurement and the availability of longitudinal and cross-national evidence.' Among the inconsistencies of meaning, Rohrbach noted that 'knowledge society' is sometimes represented as present, sometimes as future. She opted for a conceptualisation of the knowledge society as one in which the knowledge sector represents the most significant part of the economy. Using data for 19 OECD countries (not including Ireland), she purported to demonstrate that the knowledge sector does not represent the most significant sector within any of the 19 economies today. Extrapolating the sectoral development based on the period after 1990, Rohrbach argued it would take at least another 30 years before today's high-tech industry and service economies become true knowledge societies.

Similarly, in their analysis of employment patterns in Ireland for 1997–2004, Turner and D'Art (2007) found that 'knowledge occupations are growing at a slightly faster rate in the Irish labour market than other occupations' but they cautioned that this did not necessarily reflect the emergence of a new economy; in the private sector, low-skill occupations were found to be growing faster than high-skills jobs. However, the transition from a resource-based economy in the mid-20th century to a post-industrial economy could be measured differently in terms of value of output and exports, where information-technology products and services and pharmaceutical and other healthcare products had come to be the largest contributory sectors by the end of the century.

The evidence to support a claim that Ireland and other countries made a decisive shift to a distinctly new economy is ambivalent. In this context, it sometimes appears that talk of a knowledge economy is the proposal of a programme or an aspiration, even a metaphor as much as it is a precise description. From the perspective of social theory, Delanty (2003) noted that the concept was 'highly contested'. He asked, not unreasonably, whether we can speak of 'a society in which knowledge is the primary social structure'; he links the talk of a knowledge society to the contemporary ideologies of postmodernism, neo-liberalism and 'third wayism' (ibid).

Also from the perspective of social theory, Fuller (2001) explored the knowledge society as a set of structures making knowledge a source of profit, noting that 'knowledge society prophets who speak the language of knowledge management are mainly interested in exploiting existing knowledge more efficiently so as to capture a larger share of the markets in which they compete'. It is also with that goal of efficient exploitation that they promote more knowledge production. Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons have noted (2006) that knowledge, in the knowledge society, is 'now regarded not as a public good but instead as "intellectual property" that is produced, accumulated, traded like other goods and services'. But they also accepted (2001) that 'knowledge society' denotes a discernible social reality – an ever-greater role for intellectual work in economic production and the increasing social contextualization of the production of knowledge itself. Preston observed that in policy-making for a knowledge-based Europe

emphasis falls upon the production and dissemination of one particular sub-category of knowledge: the scientific and technical ... What seems like a concept, strategy and debate concerning future society-wide development and change is reduced to a highly freighted technology-centred discourse and one-sided conception of knowledge creation. ... Technology and instrumental technical knowledge becomes not merely the means but ... the key measure and goal of societal development (Preston, 2003: 49).

From an educationalist perspective, Alison Wolf (2002) questioned the assumed relations between educational investment and economic growth that underlie knowledge-society strategies, as evidenced in some quotations above. She examines these myths, as she calls them, by reference to policy in the United Kingdom where 'politicians have been obsessed with education'. Citing the 'clichés' about the knowledge economy, Wolf argues with impressive evidence that it is not clear that 'the vast amounts of public spending on education have been the key determinants of how rich we are today. Nor is it obvious that they will decide how much richer, or poorer, we will be tomorrow.' Another educational researcher, Michael Peters (2001: 16), ended a review of the knowledge-society concept as applied to learning by exhorting university colleagues:

we must not become so locked into national policy constructions and their ideological narratives to such a degree that, as servants of the state, we spend all our time satisfying its policy requirements and have no time for informed critique or for perceiving the social consequences of the policies.

The selected examples indicate the presence of a critical current in academic discussion and reflection on the knowledge society. However, as we shall see, the cautionary questions about the import and the implications of the knowledge society reflected in the above examples have been hardly heard as references to the knowledge society became pervasive through many sectors of Irish public and policy discourse.

Ireland's Emerging Knowledge Economy

Even as the economic crisis developed from mid-2008, official commitment to the knowledge economy was restated. Presenting the emergency Budget of October 2008,

Minister for Finance Brian Lenihan underlined that ‘the very significant investment in promoting the knowledge economy’ was being maintained. There were small increases (up to 5 per cent) in some of the relevant allocations at a time when cuts of 10 and more percent applied elsewhere. In January 2009, the long-delayed fifth cycle of the PRTLII programme, worth €300 million over four years, was announced, signalling yet again, in the words of the Minister for Education and Science, Batt O’Keeffe, ‘the government’s determination to prioritise investment in Ireland’s development as a knowledge-intensive economy’ (Department of Education and Science, 2009).

This thread of Irish public policy can be traced back to the case made in 1999 by the Irish Council for Science Technology and Innovation for a commitment of over €650 million in government funds over six years to research in biotechnology and information technology. The argument was made and won on the basis that Ireland was evolving, or could evolve, into a knowledge economy. Science Foundation Ireland was established in 2000 as a vehicle for these disbursements. Awarding the first Science Foundation Ireland research grants, Tánaiste Mary Harney declared that ‘the underpinning of economic development by a commitment to research has ... become even more important as we enter the Knowledge Age’ (Science Foundation Ireland, 2001). On a similar occasion three years later, the Tánaiste said that ‘these awards, in linking academic researchers with industry partners, play a significant role in building Ireland’s new knowledge-driven economy’ (NUI Galway, 2004).

The state industrial and technological policy agency, Forfás, in a publication on science and technology in Ireland, stated (2004) that ‘as part of its strategy to develop as a knowledge and innovation-based economy, Ireland has significantly increased its investment in science and technology over recent years’.

Some policy statements represented partial perspectives on, maybe even opportunistic uses of, the ‘knowledge economy’. The Information Society Commission (2002) argued for development of the country’s broadband capacity as ‘the enabling infrastructure through which information and knowledge will be accessed, used and shared’. That report was titled *Building the Knowledge Society*, though it had nothing directly to do with the *production* of knowledge.

The buttressing of policy positions by reference to knowledge economy or knowledge society became pervasive. Individual government departments and the government as a whole, state agencies, public-sector bodies, research funders, higher-education institutions and representative bodies of the higher-education sector, along with many other institutions and organisations, have found it meaningful or expedient to refer to knowledge economy or knowledge society as guiding considerations in their strategies and visions. The Higher Education Authority (2004) titled its submission to an OECD review of Ireland’s higher education system, *Creating Ireland’s Knowledge Society: Proposals for Higher Education Reform*. The text itself made no explicit reference to the knowledge society, though it did discuss the roles of higher-education institutions in knowledge production and transfer, and their ‘emerging role as potential and actual sources of enterprise and economic growth’.

There was muted questioning of the direction the knowledge-economy imperative was setting for higher education: for example, the president of the Royal Irish Academy noted ‘there was a demand from within the universities to broaden the discussions beyond the relatively narrow focus of skills for the new knowledge-based

economy to include issues surrounding the universities' traditional role of providing a broad-based education' (Ryan, 2003). But that 'demand' from universities has not been as strongly heard as has the commitment to driving the knowledge economy or knowledge society.

Announcing research project grants in 2006, the Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences invited applications 'further to the IRCHSS's commitment to supporting research of strategic benefit to Ireland's development as a knowledge society'. Individual universities have taken up the theme: University College Dublin declared that it was 'playing a central role in advancing Ireland's dynamic and highly successful knowledge economy' (University College Dublin, 2008). The government's aspirations for higher education have been framed in these terms too. Addressing university representatives in September 2008, Dr Jimmy Devins, minister of state with responsibility for science, technology and innovation, repeated the commitment of the 2006 Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation that 'growing research capability is a core component of the European Union's drive to become the most competitive and dynamic, knowledge-driven economy. Ireland has fully embraced that challenge.' (Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, 2008)

In Ireland over the past decade, discourses of the knowledge economy and knowledge society have been strongly associated with production of scientific knowledge, with technological innovation, research and development in business and higher education sectors, and with competitiveness at the levels of the individual enterprise and of the national economy. By contrast, they have been much more weakly associated with notions of quality of life, or with the intellectual contributions and knowledge derived from humanities and social sciences. It can be observed too also that 'knowledge economy' has sometimes referred to a sector of the larger economy where the highest levels of qualifications are concentrated, and it sometimes refers to the form a successful national economy takes, or should take, in the 21st century. Equally, 'knowledge economy' sometimes refers to the direction the economy is inevitably developing and sometimes to a target, or a possible future, that can be realised if the appropriate efforts and adjustments are made.

Thus, we can state that there is a semantic jumble around knowledge economy and knowledge society, that the terms carry considerable political and ideological baggage, and that the empirical basis of the terms is unclear. However, this does not mean that the terms are hopelessly confused or without denotative power: 'knowledge economy' denotes both the increasingly significant weight of knowledge as a factor in economic production and the changing social conditions of knowledge production – it refers, in this way, to a discernible social reality and to important aspects of social change.

How Media Make Sense of the Knowledge Economy

In this changing reality and in this conceptual uncertainty what is the role of the public-affairs media in amplifying or interrogating the idea of the knowledge economy? This is the question we seek to answer now, through analysis of media coverage of particular moments when knowledge-economy policy-making and communication were especially intense, and of media coverage over a period of nine months when economic and educational issues were prominent on the public agenda.

For the purposes of this analysis, ‘knowledge economy’ and ‘knowledge society’ have been treated as interchangeable. The distinction is, of course, important and it will be seen that occasionally that difference is being highlighted through the choice of one phrase rather than another. However, as this analysis concerns the level and the character of the attention mass media are paying to the development of policy in this area in general, the phrases have been conflated and, in order to save on repetition, sometimes abbreviated as KE/KS.

The launch of the government’s Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation (SSTI) in summer 2006 was one of those high-water marks for knowledge economy policy-making. This strategy document set out the bases for a major increase in spending on research and related activities over the life of the National Development Plan. Among the SSTI targets was the doubling of the numbers of PhDs by 2013. Taoiseach Bertie Ahern noted in the foreword: ‘It is essential that we continue the drive to build a truly knowledge based society’ (Government of Ireland, 2006). The first sentence of the first chapter of the strategy document itself declared: ‘The development of the knowledge economy including the factors that underpin it is one of the key challenges and opportunities facing Ireland’ (ibid). Knowledge economy and knowledge society (KE/KS) are the subject of over 20 discrete references in the document and there are many more related phrases about knowledge transfer, knowledge acquisition, and similar. The government press releases accompanying the document highlighted how the strategy was embedded in the ambition for Ireland to ‘secure its position as one of the world’s advanced knowledge economies and become renowned worldwide for the excellence of its research’ (Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, 2006).

Only one newspaper, the *Irish Times*, reflected this heavy emphasis on knowledge production and exploitation. The *Irish Examiner* covered the document launch primarily in its business pages, and the *Irish Daily Star*’s page 8 report highlighted the government’s drive to ‘secure [Ireland’s] position as one of the world’s advanced economies, thus deleting ‘knowledge’ from the supplied phrasing of the press release. Similarly, the *Irish Independent* highlighted on page 1 that ‘the Government is to spend a massive €2.7bn over the next two and a half years in a crash investment drive to spur Ireland higher up the league of world economies’. The *Irish Independent* also reported comments by opposition parties that the strategy was ‘too late’ but also the view of the Irish Universities Association that the strategy was a ‘ringing endorsement of fourth level skills as the key driver for development for Ireland as a knowledge society’. It added a welcome for the strategy document from Professor Des Fitzgerald, vice-president for research at UCD, and a broadly supportive editorial that nonetheless underlined that research expenditure was at higher levels in Britain and Sweden.

The *Irish Times* offered ringing endorsement for the government strategy; its page 1 lead was headlined:

Scientific R&D to receive €3.8bn over next 7 years

Government launches strategy to develop knowledge-driven economy.

The report referred to ‘a staggering €2.7 billion’ for research, and ‘remarkable levels of research spending’. It stated that ‘the goal is to help Ireland become a world

player in research'. Further coverage inside stated that the SSTI launch 'provides ample evidence that [the government] is taking the creation of a knowledge-based economy very seriously'. The strategy document highlighted 'the clear-cut commitment by the Government to promoting scientific endeavour', said the *Irish Times* analysis. It provided confidence to those taking up studies and a career in science 'that the government was embarked on a long-term programme to build a knowledge economy'.

There was a supportive editorial the next day, a 'warm welcome' from UCC president Gerry Wrixon a week later, and a comment from columnist Karlin Lillington the next week that 'it is not even debatable [that] R&D and a strong support for science and technology is [sic] the backbone for economic development in a knowledge economy'. This combination of contributions appeared to cast the *Irish Times* in the role of cheerleader for the government's knowledge-society strategy. Partially restoring the newspaper's balance, and proving that such strategy is, in fact, debatable, NUI Maynooth economist Professor Finbarr Bradley contributed an opinion piece to the *Irish Times* two weeks later, stating bluntly that the massive spending on R&D 'will not lead to a knowledge or innovation society' and he explored the different approaches in different countries to evaluating and exploiting knowledge (Bradley, 2006).¹

To examine more deeply these patterns of indifference in some media sectors, detached observation in others, and enthusiastic endorsement and occasional questioning comment in yet others, a sample of newspaper references to 'knowledge economy', 'knowledge society', or 'knowledge-based' was compiled from a search of the Nexis database for the period 1 May 2008 to 31 January 2009. The newspapers sampled by this means were: *Evening Herald*, *Irish Examiner*, *Irish Independent*, *Irish Times*, *Sunday Business Post*, *Sunday Independent* and *Sunday Tribune*. The Nexis database appears to give access to comprehensive or near-comprehensive content of the main parts of these newspapers, though there is some variation between the titles in respect of the content of supplements. It must be acknowledged immediately that this sample gives a partial view of Irish newspapers as a whole. This is partly compensated by a more comprehensive search of newspapers for a shorter period in which there was an especially high level of government and other activity around knowledge economy-related issues; this will be reported later.

In the period May 2008 to January 2009, Brian Cowen was elected as Taoiseach and the government was reshuffled (May 2008), an early Budget was introduced in response to the deepening economic and public finances crisis (October 2008) and the government's 'smart economy' plan for economic renewal was published (December 2008). On his election as Taoiseach Brian Cowen declared the knowledge economy to be among his high-level themes, and he announced the assignment to Green Party minister Eamon Ryan of responsibility for producing an Action Plan for the Knowledge Society. This referred particularly to the development of the communication technologies infrastructure, thus continuing one of the strands of semantic uncertainty in discussion of the knowledge society referred to earlier. It is perhaps worth noting, as an indication of the media's attention to this area of policy-making,

¹ Bradley developed the argument further in an article (2007) and a book (2008) co-authored with James Kennelly in which he stressed the importance of cultural and social dimensions of economic development, particularly innovation.

that the Action Plan for the Knowledge Society was due to be produced by summer 2008. But it was again included among the proposals of *Building Ireland's Smart Economy: A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal*, released in December 2008, when it was stated that the Action Plan was due for release in 'mid-2009'. The body of newspaper content assembled for this study contained no reference either to the repetition of the plan's announcement or to the postponement by nearly a year of its completion.

Taoiseach Cowen's early restatement of the government commitment to the knowledge economy and knowledge society was echoed through the following months in the speeches and statements of his ministers, notably those of the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment, Mary Coughlan, her junior, Jimmy Devins, minister of state for science technology and innovation, and Batt O'Keeffe, the Minister for Education and Science. Their promotion of the cause has been reflected in the press, very often in the reproduction of quotes from their scripts.

The body of material of newspaper archive material for the sample period comprised a total of 185 articles that matched the search criteria, and after duplicate items, irrelevant items and letters to the editor were removed. Distribution of these items across the newspapers was notably uneven: *Evening Herald* (2 items); *Irish Examiner* (13); *Sunday Tribune* (2); *Sunday Independent* (10); *Sunday Business Post* (25), *Irish Independent* (27); *Irish Times* (105). Thus, the *Irish Times* accounted for more 'knowledge economy' references than all of the other newspapers combined. Even allowing for the Sunday newspapers' less frequent publication, the position of the *Irish Times* is notable.

The retrieved articles were coded according to the following criteria: (a) whether the search terms were used directly by authors of the articles or were found in quotation; (b) the author or quoted source of the relevant mention; (c) the topic of the article, and thus the context of the mention; (d) the stance towards the knowledge economy indicated in the reference, within the context of the article.

Approximately equal numbers of items were found in which the searched-for phrases were contained in a direct or indirect quote attributed to a named source (93), or were used directly by the author of the item, whether a journalist or an invited contributor (92). In this second category, there was also an almost equal distribution of invited contributors (48) and journalists (44). Thus, less than one quarter of all KE/KS references occurred in the journalists' own words. When we also see the recurrence of a small number of specialist correspondents and columnists among the journalists found to be using these terms directly, and we also note the distancing devices, as in 'knowledge economy', in quote marks, or 'so-called knowledge economy', frequently used by journalists, we can observe that these terms have not been strongly assimilated into journalists' own language, or the media vernacular.

As noted, quoted sources and invited contributors accounted for over three times as many KE/KS references as journalists. The invited contributors and the quoted sources using the key phrases came from education (49), business (35), government (27), state bodies (12), trade unions and student unions (12); these categories accounted for all but six of the sources or contributors. The strong presence of the education sector reflects the several rounds of public debates about the performance of schools and school students, and about the funding of higher education and the possible reintroduction of tuition fees, in the sample period.

This distribution of contributors and sources is reflected also in the thematic contexts of the KE/KS references: education (78); economy (57); research and research investment (27); business (15); telecommunications (6); politics (5); other, including culture and arts (2). This distribution, and notably the relatively small number of occurrences in the ‘other’ category, indicates that knowledge-economy terms remain very largely anchored in their home domains of knowledge (education and research) and economy (and enterprise). The way in which the database search was performed would have retrieved articles in which passing reference was made to KE/KS. Such references would indicate naturalisation of the phrases into everyday discourse, such as appears to have happened, for example, to the notion of carbon footprint, mentioned earlier. Rare examples of such passing references in articles on a topic other than economic or educational were in an article on arts policy by Marian Fitzgibbon of Athlone Institute of Technology (*Irish Times*, 26 August 2008) and a column on cultural change by Fintan O’Toole (*Irish Times*, 8 November 2008).

Media Stances on the Knowledge Economy

The 185 articles with KE/KS references in this sample were also coded according to four discernible stances towards the knowledge economy. Some examples of each stance, as they were coded in the present study, will serve to illustrate how the distinctions were made.

Description, where the terms were used in matter-of-fact manner, without implied judgement, to refer to something taken to really exist, e.g.

The two-part report said more investment was needed in education and Ireland’s knowledge economy as well as R&D industries (National Competitiveness Council, quoted in *Irish Examiner*, 9 January 2009).

The document [*Building Ireland’s Smart Economy*] repeatedly makes reference to increases in Science Foundation Ireland and related funding, all predicated on moving towards a knowledge economy (Prof Brian Lucey, TCD, in *Irish Times*, 20 December 2008).

The long-lasting effects and benefits of this programme [Fás Science Challenge] will be measured undoubtedly in its contribution to securing a knowledge-based economy in Ireland (Prof Bert W O’Malley, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, quoted in *Irish Independent*, 5 December 2008).

Endorsement, where the terms were used in a way, or in a context, that indicated the author’s or source’s wish to see the knowledge economy realised or indicated their approval for the current knowledge economy strategy, e.g.

We must complete the next stage of our progress – the transition to the ‘knowledge’ economy (*Irish Independent* editorial, 23 June 2008).

Ireland – like other developed states – is moving from being a post-industrial economy based on manufacturing goods to becoming a knowledge economy (*Irish Times* editorial, 2 July 2008).

Future economic prospects for Ireland depend on building a knowledge-based economy (columnist William Reville, in *Irish Times*, 10 July 2008).

Caution, where the terms were used in a way, or in a context, that indicated the author's or source's concern about the viability of the current knowledge economy strategy – this could be indicated in the use of qualifying adjectives, quote marks as distancing devices or the conditional form: if we want the knowledge economy, then this must happen, e.g.

Another set of Leaving Cert results ... Cue the warnings about the future of inward investment and the 'knowledge' economy (Cliff Taylor, *Sunday Business Post*, 17 August 2008).

Ireland needs to deliver the much-vaunted 'knowledge economy' (*Irish Independent* editorial, 31 July 2008).

... the Government's commitment to the development of the so-called 'knowledge economy' (Sean Flynn, *Irish Times*, 27 May 2008).

In jargon-speak this is referred to as the 'knowledge economy' (Graham Love, SFI, *Sunday Independent*, 17 August 2008).

Scepticism, where the use of the terms or the context of their use represented a challenge by the author or source to the feasibility or to the claimed benefits of the knowledge economy, e.g.

The refrain that policymakers have repeated over and over ... was the drive to create 'Ireland's knowledge economy' (Charles Larkin and Dr Jacco Thijssen, *Sunday Business Post*, 10 August 2008).

What chance has Ireland in the knowledge economy if its best and brightest all want to do law or medicine? (Brendan Keenan, *Irish Independent*, 24 August 2008).

What lies behind this is the delusional nature of our 'knowledge society' (Fintan O'Toole, *Irish Times*, 19 August 2008).

Ireland's evolution into a 'smart' or 'knowledge' economy seemed [this week] little more than an increasingly distant pipedream (Editorial, *Irish Times*, 10 January 2009).

On this basis, the sampled items were coded as follows: description (39); endorsement (62); caution (58); scepticism (27). A very small number of items contained quotations or references which represented two different perspectives on the knowledge economy; consequently, the total number in these categories is greater than the total number of items retrieved. It is notable that the distribution of items in these categories changes over time and, in particular, that scepticism strengthens and endorsement weakens through the sample period. This is represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Media Stances to the Knowledge Economy

	<i>May–July 2008</i>	<i>August–October 2008</i>	<i>November 2008– January 2009</i>	<i>Total</i>
Description	10	11	18	39
Endorsement	20	29	13	62
Caution	19	27	12	58
Scepticism	0	13	14	27
Total	49	80	57	186

The references coded as cautious do not necessarily indicate a view on the desirability or otherwise of pursuing the knowledge economy agenda. Rather, KE/KS references in the several rounds of public and political debate about the funding of higher education, about participation levels and performance in Leaving Certificate sciences and maths, and about the state of the national and international economy often bore the implication or the explicit qualification that the conditions were not in place for the KE/KS to be achieved.

The emerging evidence of difficulties in the economy from summer 2008 onwards, and the evident disparities between policy ambitions and student performance and attitudes, were two major factors giving licence for a more qualified approach to the knowledge economy. As long as the contestation or interrogation of the concepts was theoretical and largely confined to the academic arena, the media barely took account of the debate, even when expressions of scepticism appeared in their own pages. In the case of the *Irish Times*, any contestation from invited contributors was for some time drowned out by the paper's own strong endorsement. The rising volume of more qualified, even sceptical commentary from within the media's own resources may have been more a reflection of the current economic situation than a cyclical change in the attention specifically to the KE/KS issue.

Two further observations about this coverage may be worth making: (1) knowledge economy (141) and knowledge-based economy (29) references far outnumbered knowledge society (19) references. In a small number of cases, 'knowledge society' was used deliberately in order to distinguish from 'knowledge economy', and to make a point about the relative narrowness of official policy; (2) in reference to the semantic uncertainty surrounding KE/KS phrases mentioned earlier, quotes coded as representing the knowledge economy as present (86) or future (100) were in similar proportions, and those representing the knowledge economy as a sector of the economy (34) were significantly outnumbered by those representing it as the whole of the economy (152).

Coverage of Knowledge-Economy Events

In a further effort to validate the analysis of the nine-month sample of newspaper coverage, a broader sample of newspapers was analysed for a week in mid-December 2008 during which several announcements were made, reports were released and initiatives were taken that bore significantly on the government's knowledge economy

strategy. Recognising that media could cover knowledge economy-related topics without using any of three particular phrases, it was decided to review reporting of these events, using print copies of the newspapers as source. The announcements and publications mentioned were all constructed as news events with the issue of media releases and, in some cases, the hosting of a press conference or reception. The media were in receipt of substantial ‘information subsidies’, as Gandy (1982) called them, to help them in the reporting these events:

1. Monday, 15 December 2008: release by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs of Statement on Raising National Mathematical Achievement (3-page press release + 16-page statement)
2. Monday, 15 December 2008: publication by Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment of *Review of the Implementation of the Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation* (8-page press release + 84-page report)
3. Wednesday, 17 December 2008: announcement by Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment of investment by Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) in three research centres (2-page press release)
4. Wednesday, 17 December 2008: publication by Advisory Council for Science Technology and Innovation of statement, *Ireland's International Engagement in Science, Technology and Innovation* (2-page release + 64-page statement)
5. Thursday, 18 December 2008: publication by Educational Research Centre, at St Patrick's College Drumcondra, of *A Teacher's Guide to PISA Science*, an analysis of Irish second-level students' performance in international science assessments (2-page press release + 68-page report).
6. Thursday, 18 December 2008: release by government of *Building Ireland's Smart Economy: A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal* (2-page press release + 100-page document)

In four of the six cases, the press releases and original documents explicitly highlighted the relevance of the announcement or publication to the declared strategy of building a knowledge economy. The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs statement on mathematical achievement noted that ‘mathematics ... is a fundamental requirement for the growth of the knowledge economy and the development of a world-class research and innovation system in Ireland’. The Tánaiste's introduction to the *Review of the Implementation of the Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation* underlined that the strategy was one of ‘transforming Ireland into a competitive knowledge economy’. On the occasion of the announcement of grants to three ‘world-class’ research centres for science, engineering and technology, the director-general of Science Foundation Ireland, Frank Gannon, said that these and other centres ‘have led our portfolio of initiatives that are steadily moving Ireland towards a truly knowledge-based economy’. The government's economic renewal plan proposed the development of a ‘smart economy’, an apparently conscious alternative to ‘knowledge economy’, but also a restatement of the commitment to ‘[invest] heavily in research and development’ and to build ‘an exemplary research, innovation and commercialisation ecosystem’.

The media coverage of these events is summarised in the following paragraphs.

Expert Group report: Several news reports on the Expert Group's report on maths competence (RTE Nine O'Clock News, 15 December 2008; *Irish Examiner*, *Irish Independent*, *Irish Times*, all 16 December 2008) highlighted the group's recommendation that students taking higher-level examinations at Leaving Certificate should be awarded bonus points. The *Irish Times* commented that this recommendation was unlikely to be adopted by the Minister for Education.

SSTI Review: The *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent* (both 16 December 2008) carried short reports on the review of the SSTI, with the *Irish Times* highlighting the four-fold increase in research spending over a decade, and the *Irish Independent* adding to its summary of recent R&D-related initiatives a commentary from Irish National Teachers' Organisation general secretary John Carr on the contrast between research spending and very much lower spending on science and technology facilities in primary schools. The imbalance between inputs to the media and media outputs was especially notable in this case.

Research Centre Grants: The *Irish Daily Mail*, *Irish Examiner*, *Irish Daily Star* and *Irish Times* (all 18 December 2008) carried reports on the allocation of grants to three university-based research centres, all carrying the total grant sum of €60 million in their headlines. The *Star* and *Times* drew attention to the government's and Science Foundation Ireland's aim, through such grants, to build 'a world-class research base' in Ireland.

Advisory Council Report: No coverage of this report was found.

School students' performance on science: Only the *Irish Examiner* (19 December 2008) covered the publication of the Education Research Centre report on Irish school students' performance in international assessments of competence in science during the sample period. (The *Irish Independent* referred to it a month later.)

Smart Economy Plan: All of the sampled media gave prominent coverage to the launch of the Smart Economy plan, though the *Irish Daily Star* and *Irish Daily Mail* (both 19 December 2008) gave more paragraphs to criticism of the plan from various quarters than to its content or to the government's presentation of it. The *Mail's* editorial referred to the stated aims to develop a 'smart economy' and 'innovation island' as 'really just another jumble of civil service jargon', while the *Star's* editorial declared the plan was 'thin on policies, bereft of detail'. RTE 1's Nine O'Clock News (18 December 2008) carried five reports in total focused on the plan, two of these highlighting in particular the proposals aimed at boosting research and innovation. One package reported positive reaction from business leaders in the technology sector. The *Irish Examiner* and *Irish Independent* (both 19 December 2008) gave space to Taoiseach Brian Cowen for a presentation of the plan's rationale.

In its coverage of the Smart Economy plan, the *Irish Times* (19 December 2008) gave detailed treatment to the establishment of a €500 million innovation fund with contributions from the state and from US venture capital funds in several articles on pages 1, 8 and 9. The commitment to supporting green technology was also

highlighted, but a critical commentary by Eunan King claimed the ‘elephant remained firmly in the room’ as the plan offered no clear view of how and why the economy had deteriorated. Feature writer Miriam Lord wrote that ‘many observers at yesterday’s launch were of the opinion that the Taoiseach’s Get Smart document is an airy-fairy confection of past pledges bundled together under new wrapping’. Political editor Stephen Collins referred to the document as ‘100 pages of bureaucratic verbiage’ and commented that it did not make clear how Ireland would get from where it was now to being ‘the world’s leading location for business innovation’. An *Irish Times* editorial described the plan as ‘a patchwork document’ with proposals that ‘make sense’ but neither clear nor vigorous enough on ‘unruly Government finances’. The previously supportive *Irish Times* was evidently influenced, like other media, by concerns as to whether the government’s policy was adequate for the challenges the economy faced.

Irish Daily Star columnist Richard Bruton, deputy leader of Fine Gael, repeated his view (20 December 2008) of the smart economy plan as ‘dumb’. In the *Sunday Business Post* (21 December 2008), political editor Pat Leahy noted the hostile response of media to the plan but contributor Joe Bollard supported the plan’s emphasis on supporting the commercialisation of research and columnist David McWilliams declared that the innovation-centred elements of plan were ‘ingenious’, ‘smart’, ‘important’ and ‘should be welcomed’. This was one of the very few endorsements. In contrast, *Sunday Independent* columnist Brendan O’Connor (21 December 2008) declared ‘the new “Smart Economy” was none other, it turns out, than a vague amalgam of the old “Knowledge Economy” bullshit that various quan-gos have been churning out for a decade’.

As can be seen, some coverage of the ‘smart economy’ initiative linked it explicitly or implicitly to the earlier KE/KS discourses, though generally as a means of critique or, as in the last case above, simple dismissal. Thus, looking back from late 2008, many media contributors applied a perspective to the ‘knowledge economy’ drive of the previous years that was markedly different from that which prevailed at the time.

In the weeks and months after the publication of the government’s smart-economy plan, some of the same patterns noted above could be observed. Government ministers in enterprise and education areas promoted the new phrase strongly, e.g. Tánaiste Mary Coughlan’s defence of research investment as a help to ‘create jobs and build a “smart economy” for Ireland’ (*Irish Times*, 26 February 2009). Interest groups adopted the new phrase expediently, e.g. the statement by Prof Jim Browne, president of Engineers Ireland (and of NUI-Galway) that engineers would be in high demand as Ireland made the transition to a ‘smart economy’ (*Irish Times*, 4 February 2009). The *Irish Times* endorsed the government’s perspective, e.g. science editor Dick Ahlstrom’s comment that ‘there is no doubt that a smart economy will bring with it jobs and wealth’ (*Irish Times*, *Innovation* magazine, February 2009).²

² During the debate on the government’s management of the economic crisis which marked the local and European election campaign of May-June 2009, economics lecturer and journalist Constantin Gurgdiev (2009) wrote that the effort to get more PhDs and public capital into science-based sectors represented ‘a waste of economic resources’, that the ‘focus on science-based R&D is hopelessly out of synch with international trends’ and that the goal of doubling PhD numbers ‘without regard to the quality of these researchers’ was ‘patently absurd’. The *Irish Times*’s science editor indirectly replied (Ahlstrom 2009), declaring: ‘Backing off from the promised investments in science and research has the potential to undermine the undoubted gains we have made ... It will also take the life out of our ambitions to develop a knowledge economy.’

Conclusion

This analysis offers a view of how ‘knowledge economy’ and related terms that originated and matured in academic and policy discourses have been adopted in media discourses. As noted earlier, the ways in which journalism brings together the language of everyday with the language of specialist domains can leave the seams between these languages more or less visible. In this case, the seams have remained highly visible: we have observed the weak assimilation of ‘knowledge economy’ phrases into the natural language of journalism, as indicated in the more frequent use of these terms in direct or indirect quotations from expert sources, or in quote marks without any specific attribution, than in the direct words of the journalist. We have drawn attention to the diverse levels of attention and stances between various media towards the ‘knowledge economy’ and its cognates. In particular, we have noted the position of the *Irish Times* as a more frequent observer and commentator on, and strong advocate for, the knowledge society (latterly, smart economy) strategy and its implications for education and research. But we have seen too the generally rising level of scepticism about this strategy and increasing media space being given to questioning of its assumptions, as scepticism rose generally about the government’s handling of the wider economic crisis.

I have analysed elsewhere (Trench, 2007) how Irish media coverage of science tends to present it as remote, as relevant mainly to economic development, or as something to be celebrated. In all of these perspectives, Irish media represent science as difficult for society to engage with. A similar detachment runs through much of the coverage of the knowledge economy, perhaps reflecting the fairly desultory political discussion of science and the knowledge economy in response to the promulgation of policy. But it remains a matter of interest, not just to media analysis but also to democracy and citizenship, that topics and terms so central to public policy discourses are marginal to media discourses.

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WHOSE DEVELOPMENT: Framing of Ireland's Aid Communities by Institutional Sources and the Media During and After the Celtic Tiger

Cliona Barnes & Anthony Cawley

Introduction

IN SEPTEMBER 2006 THE GOVERNMENT'S newly published White Paper on Irish Aid was presented to the media and the public as a statement of Ireland's new position in, and increased responsibilities to, the international community.¹ The economic success of the Celtic Tiger era had endowed the State not only with the means but also with the obligation to strengthen its aid commitments to developing nations. The White Paper outlined an ambitious strategy: Irish Aid would administer the overseas aid budget (OAB) to direct development assistance to nine 'programme' countries, seven in Africa and two in Asia. Smaller amounts of aid would go to 'other aid recipient countries' in Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia. In implementing the strategy, Irish Aid would develop partnerships with and allocate funding to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), multilateral organisations and the governments of developing countries. The White Paper committed the Government to raising the OAB to 0.7% of Gross National Product (GNP) by 2012. On reaching this level, Government projections anticipated an annual OAB of about €1.5bn.

However, supporting developing nations was not central to how the White Paper and the OAB were framed by Government sources or in the subsequent media coverage. Rather, the central frames were Ireland's growing 'status' and 'wealth' during the Celtic Tiger – economically, socially, and internationally. The OAB, in particular, was linked to 'what it meant to be Irish in the 21st Century'. The assumptions underpinning the frames originated with Government sources and passed through the media largely unquestioned and unchallenged.

Coverage of the White Paper highlighted the media's dependency on the Government as a provider of information and authoritative sources. It also illustrated

1 Section three of this article, which discusses media coverage of the White Paper on Irish Aid, draws on research conducted by the authors for Connect World (www.connect-world.net). The authors wish to acknowledge the role of Connect World Director Katherine Meenan in commissioning and supporting the research. The authors also wish to thank Brian Trench, School of Communications, Dublin City University, and Michael Foley, School of Journalism, Dublin Institute of Technology, for their roles in the management of the project and assistance in drafting the final report. The report, entitled Media Coverage of the White Paper on Irish Aid and the Joint Consortium's Second Report on Gender-Based Violence, 2006, is available to download at www.connect-world.net.

the ability of institutional sources to set the frames for media reportage on issues and events. It confirmed, further, the media's tendency to report processes as fragmented, loosely connected events. The media set the borders of the White Paper coverage around the immediacy of its publication. Excluded, as a result, were two dimensions that would have placed the OAB into a more rounded, critical context: the past, and the Government's record of renegeing on previous aid commitments; the future, and the Government's capacity to raise the OAB to the historically high level of 0.7% of GNP.

Within two years the Government's capacity to meet its aid commitments would become a central theme in the media's coverage of the OAB. In July 2008, with the national economy in recession, the Government announced a €45m reduction in the OAB. A global credit crunch, a strengthening euro against sterling and the dollar, and a collapsing domestic property market, among other factors, were eroding large tracts of the public finances. Exchequer spending was cut across all departments. The Government's first raft of spending cuts – €440m of 'savings' – drew strong criticism and hostility from the media and the public, especially in how they applied to education and health.

The cut to the OAB – or 'reduction', as worded by the Government – received relatively little attention as the media focused on spending cuts in domestic areas. Nevertheless, the coverage marked a significant departure from how the OAB had been framed in 2006: from a Celtic Tiger symbol of 'status' and 'wealth' to Post-Celtic Tiger concerns about 'cost' and 'capacity to pay'. The media's approach shifted too, from a consensual and congratulatory tone to one of opposition and conflict.

In synch with this new tone was a swing in the media's treatment of Government sources: from 'positive' and 'lead' sources in 2006 to 'defensive' and 'respondent' sources in 2008. In many news-stories, Government sources were cast as respondents to NGO criticisms. Lewis et al., in a content analysis of British print and broadcast news, noted the media's tendency to quote NGOs as an 'opposing' viewpoint (Lewis et al., 2008: 13). Opposing viewpoints lay at the margins of the White Paper coverage, and NGOs barely featured as sources. In 2008, NGOs were granted greater prominence and legitimacy as sources.

Taking the aid agencies as broadly aligned, two sets of institutional sources were competing to frame the decision relating to the OAB in 2008. In its construction of news, the media presented this to the public as conflict. As with the White Paper coverage, however, the media continued to transmit frames that originated with supplied information and institutional sources. The coverage echoed Schudson's argument that news is often the story of institutions and bureaucracies talking to each other (Schudson, 2003).

Despite the conflict dimension, two overarching frames remained consistent between 2006 and 2008: first, the media orientated the OAB as primarily a domestic news-story; second, the OAB continued to be cast as a reflection of Ireland's economic status.

Individually, the samples of coverage from 2006 and 2008 raise questions about the media's relationship with institutional sources, particularly in its dependency on 'subsidised information' (Gandy, 1982). Collectively, the samples raise questions about the framing of public debate in Ireland, the unquestioned assumptions that can underpin it, and how the media's narrow focus on immediacy can decontextualise and simplify complex political, social and economic processes.

Information Subsidies and Agenda Setting

In the 1920s, the novelist and political commentator Upton Sinclair criticised American journalism for its growing dependency on information supplied by the government and various government departments (Sinclair, 2003; original publication 1928). Sinclair's wide-ranging argument presented, according to McChesney and Scott, 'a systematic critique of U.S. journalism, arguably the first one ever made' (2003: xii). Later scholars such as Schiller, Herman, Chomsky and Murdoch would refine the basic argument that was emerging from Sinclair's work: that elite groups in the capitalist and political systems held significant influence over what the media published as news.

Sinclair was one of the first scholars to use the word 'chill' to describe how newspapers would spike news that damaged the interests of the powerful, most commonly advertisers but also businessmen and politicians. To Sinclair's early political-economic analysis of U.S. journalism we can trace many of the challenges that have faced scholars since media studies began to be recognised as a distinct academic discipline: the relationship of the media to capital and to government, the independence of journalists and the values that underpin their selection of what is and what is not news. Linked to these concerns has been the growing dependency of the media on government and the public relations industry for pre-packaged information that can be, quickly and easily, presented as news.

Since 1934, and the establishment of the Government Information Bureau, Irish governments have had formal structures for transmitting information to the media (Horgan, 2001). Today's structures are elaborate. Departments and state agencies have press officers to respond to journalists' queries and to issue press releases and statements. Press conference schedules signal to journalists which ministers may be available for interview on a given day. Department websites are an additional information resource.

In the 1980s, Gandy (1982) offered the term 'information subsidy' to describe the media's increasing reliance on supplied sources of news. Be it in the form of a press conference, a press release or a briefing by a press officer, information subsidy holds many advantages for the media: it ensures a regular flow of news-worthy information; it reduces the need for journalists to dig up original information and check its accuracy; it facilitates easy and regular access to authoritative sources; it increases the productivity of journalists who can file multiple news-stories per day; and it lowers the costs of production by enabling fewer journalists to fill the news-hole.

The price of information subsidy is its close alignment to 'agenda setting' (e.g., Gandy, 1982; VanSlyke Turk and Franklin, 1987). Gandy recognised this when he argued that control of information implied control of decision-making in society. He believed that powerful groups within the capitalist system were motivated to subsidise the media's costs of (news) information production to try to ensure 'that [their] preferred message is faithfully reproduced' (Gandy, 1982: 198).

A normative discourse within the profession of journalism is that the media's institutional activities of gathering and distributing information are central to the functioning of democracy and the maintenance of an informed citizenry (Carlson, 2007). Embedded in this discourse is journalism's responsibility to challenge and question the communications of government and other powerful interests to report 'the truth' and protect the public interest.

Journalism as a professional practice is performed within tight constraints: pressure of deadlines, limited resources to pursue alternative sources of information, restrictions on space or airtime in which to tell stories, conformity to editorial policy, and socialisation into professional norms that value institutional sources as authoritative. Within such restrictions, the media often fails to filter out ideological bias or sectional interest from subsidised information before it passes to the public.

Lewis et al. have raised similar concerns about the British media. They measured the volume of public relations material – originating with government, industry, and the entertainment sector – that was published as news in a sample of UK print and broadcast media over a two-week period. They found that the media's reliance on such material was 'extensive' and called into question the UK media's independence and capacity to function as a fourth estate. Further, they argued: 'A political economy analysis suggests that the factors which have created this editorial reliance on these "information subsidies" seem set to continue, if not increase, in the near future' (Lewis et al., 2008: 1).

Framing of News

Framing remains a somewhat loose concept in media studies, despite recent attempts to provide a tighter conceptualisation (e.g. D'Angelo, 2002; Johnson-Cartee, 2004; de Vreese, 2005; Vliegenthart and Roggeband, 2007). A common starting point is Entman's definition of frames as making perceived reality more salient through a communicative text (Entman 1993). We apply the concept in the manner of De Vreese, who regards frames as devices to present and define an issue (de Vreese, 2005). Frames, as applied to the media, are rooted in research on political economy, the sociology of news and the social construction of reality (e.g. Gans, 1978; Tuchman, 1978). The concept of framing tends to be at odds with journalists' self-conceptions, which regard news as mirroring reality and their judgements of what is news as 'natural' or, at least, 'neutral' choices.

The media use frames to facilitate audience understanding of news by placing order on complex issues and events. D'Angelo argues: 'Frames that paradigmatically dominate news are also believed to dominate audiences' (2002: 875). Such domination is subject to negotiation, however, as audiences read the news through their own interpretative frames, i.e. their political allegiances can influence their reading of news-stories on policy issues.

Frames extend not only from the media to the audience. They extend back from the media to its original sources. In taking this approach, we regard the Government, NGOs and the media as institutional actors in the co-construction of news relating to the White Paper and the OAB. Our approach echoes that of Touri (2009). She argues that multiple social actors shape news frames: through sponsoring their preferred meaning, they can fashion news-stories into a 'platform for framing contests' (172).

Our research suggests that information supplied to the media by institutional sources is encoded with frames, e.g. the sectional interests promoted in a press release and the ideological positions and assumptions underpinning them. The media can resist institutional framing by taking a different news-angle or by questioning and challenging encoded sectional interests. But, as our case-study demonstrates, the media is often a weak filter of frames encoded by institutional sources.

Research Samples and Methodology

Our research is based on a content analysis of print media material. For the White Paper we examined, in hardcopy, the main Irish daily and Sunday newspapers for a two-week period around the document’s launch on 18 September 2006. The time-frame spanned three days before the launch, the launch day itself, and ten days after. It was configured to test the White Paper’s durability in the news agenda. Our sample also included the Department of Foreign Affairs press release announcing the document’s publication.

Figure 1: White Paper on Irish Aid Coverage by Date and Volume, 2006

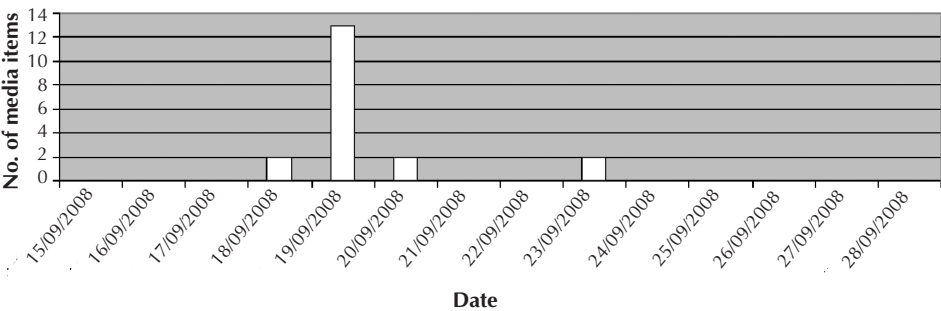
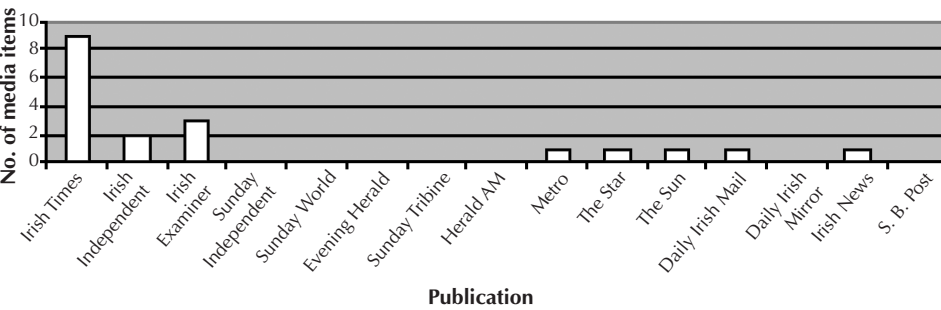


Figure 2: White Paper on Irish Aid Coverage by Newspaper



Our second sample was of articles that, in whole or in part, discussed the Government’s reduction in the OAB in 2008. The sample’s timeframe was July to December. The longer timeframe was necessary to examine whether framing of the OAB shifted as the public finances deteriorated rapidly throughout the year. Because of the six-month timeframe, we lacked sufficient resources to examine the newspapers in hardcopy. Instead, we gathered our sample through the Nexis database.

Methodological questions have been raised about the ‘push button content analysis’ associated with online archives such as Nexis (Deacon, 2007). One concern is that archived articles are removed from the context of their original publication, i.e. from their position on the page and stripped of accompanying photographs. Another con-

cern is that even the most comprehensive online archives may not capture everything published in a newspaper.

A strong consideration for our research was the reliability of word searches to capture all relevant material. We were also aware that word searches tend to throw up false positives. To guard against these weaknesses, we conducted a number of word searches within the 'Irish publications' parameter of Nexis: searches included Irish Aid, Overseas Aid Budget, Overseas Development Aid, Development Budget, Foreign Aid and White Paper. We collated the findings into a single electronic file. We then read through each article to determine whether it was relevant to our study.

This search uncovered the bulk of our sample. However, we had to conduct a second search within 'British newspapers' to capture the Irish editions of UK titles. The second search returned articles from the Irish editions of the *Sun*, the *Mail*, and the *Sunday Times*.

Our sample included the Government's press release issued on 9 July 2008. Because NGOs featured prominently as sources, we also gathered the press releases issued by the main aid agencies: Goal, Concern, Trócaire, and Oxfam Ireland.

Figure 3: OAB Reduction Coverage by Volume and Date, 2008

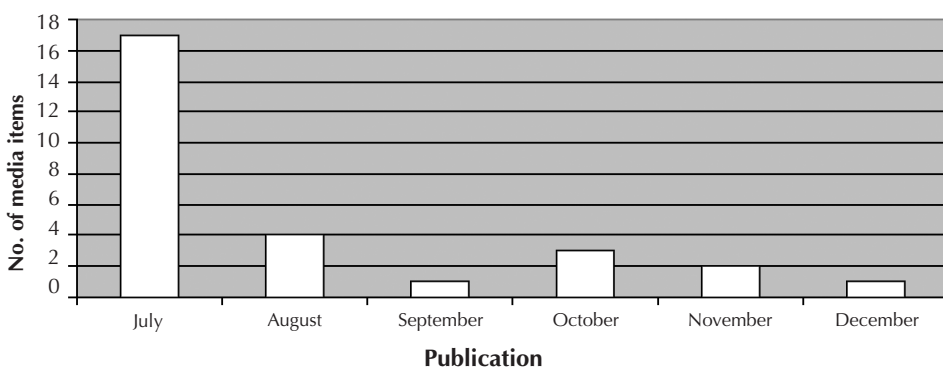
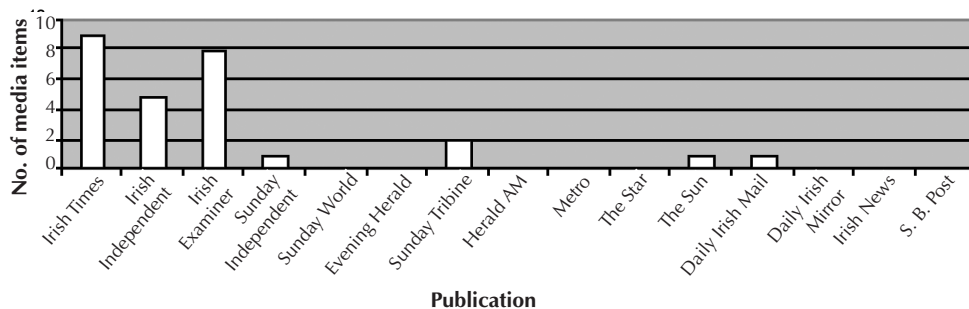


Figure 4: OAB Reduction Coverage by Newspaper



Framing of the White Paper and OAB in the Celtic Tiger Era

With the publication of the White Paper on Irish Aid the government was making a pledge to the United Nations (UN) for the second time: to reach and maintain an annual overseas aid commitment of 0.7% of GNP. The original pledge was made in 2000. The government reneged after an economic downturn in 2001 and 2002. The downturn was short-lived, however, and the following years saw strong economic activity and growth in public spending. In 2006, the government again pledged to the UN to raise its aid commitments to 0.7% of GNP, a projected sum of about €1.5bn, with a target date of 2012.

The *Irish Times* welcomed the White Paper in its editorial of 20 September 2006, calling it 'excellent', and adding, 'There is no doubting the Irish public's interest in the subject.' The statement was defensible in the *Irish Times*, which carried the most in-depth and reflective coverage. However, the media often conflates *public interest* with *publishing news that journalists assume the public is interested in*. Reflected across the coverage as a whole, the media did not seem to judge a significant public interest in the White Paper. It had, effectively, fallen off the news agenda the day after its publication was reported. Neither did its small volume of coverage suggest that the media judged the subject to be of significant public interest, either, at least in how it applied to Irish Aid's development activities.

'What' the development issues were, 'where' they were occurring, and 'how' the aid programme would engage with them were generally not news. Articles tended to sum up development issues as 'humanitarian disasters' and identified their location as 'Africa' or, even broader, 'overseas'. The *Irish Times*, alone, listed the nine programme countries and reported that two of them were in Asia.

The dominant news-frame was modern Ireland's changing status – economically, socially, and internationally. The White Paper was framed to represent Ireland as a nation with the newly acquired wealth to afford an enlarged overseas aid programme; to represent what it meant to be Irish in the 21st century; to represent a new departure in Irish foreign policy, with the potential for the country to become a 'global leader' in bridging the divide between developed and developing nations.

The frames originated with government sources at the press conference to launch the White Paper and with the Department of Foreign Affairs press release. A number of news-stories were based on the press release alone. The two most prominent quotes in the media coverage were among the lead quotations in the press release. First, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern: 'I believe our aid programme is a practical expression of the values that help define what it means to be Irish at the beginning of the 21st century.' Second, Minister of State Conor Lenihan: 'This is the first time in our island history that we have both the money and the expertise to make a real difference.'²

Drawing on the frames encoded in the government speeches and press release, the media positioned the White Paper as a reflection of Ireland's wealthier economic status. 'A super-league Third World aid programme fit for a super-rich Ireland has been launched by the Taoiseach' was the opening sentence of the *Irish Independent's* (19 September) news-report. It was the sole description of the country as 'super-rich',

² The press release can be accessed at the Department of Foreign Affairs website: <http://www.dfa.ie/hom e/index.aspx?id=25159>

but even in subtler language the principal frame was Ireland's economic status and its attendant consequences – in the changes it brought socially (in the values of what it meant to be Irish) and internationally (in the duties and obligations of a wealthy nation to aid developing nations).

The *Irish Examiner* (19 September) described the White Paper as 'reflecting Ireland's newfound status as one of the richest economies of the developed world'. This statement captured neatly the tone of the coverage: the commitment of €1.5bn a year as reflecting status.

The *Irish Times* was the sole newspaper to highlight that, because of an economic downturn in 2001, the government had reneged on a previous commitment. The newspaper (23 September) added that, in the event of another economic downturn, the aid commitments would be 'bound to pinch'.

Beyond this, the print media did not engage with the issue of Ireland's capacity to reach and maintain an annual spend of €1.5bn on overseas aid if the economy suffered another downturn.

Within the overarching frame of Ireland's economic status, an important dimension was how the White Paper represented the 'values' of what it meant to be Irish in the 21st century. It was prompted by a quote attributed to Bertie Ahern in the press release:

Speaking at the launch An Taoiseach said: 'I believe our aid programme is a practical expression of the values that help define what it means to be Irish at the beginning of the 21st century. It represents our sense of broader social concern and our obligation to those with whom we share our humanity.'

The quotation, with the first sentence re-cast as a paraphrased lead, was carried in the *Irish Times*, the *Irish Examiner*, the *Irish Daily Mail*, the *Irish News*, the *Irish Sun*, the *Irish Star* and *Metro*.

Another prominent frame was how the White Paper represented a new departure (third phase) in the country's foreign policy: a higher role in international relations. Speaking at the launch, Minister Dermot Ahern claimed that the country's first phase of foreign policy was the achievement of sovereignty and independence; the second was peace and prosperity; the third would be (potentially) the country's role as a bridge between the developed and developing worlds. Also speaking at the launch, Conor Lenihan contributed to the theme with the claim that Ireland had the potential to be a 'global leader' in the area.

In its coverage, the media drew on a narrow range of sources and source material: the three government speakers at the launch and the press release, with rare quotation of the White Paper's text. The likelihood of government sources being quoted was broadly in line with their seniority in the cabinet (and the running order of their quotes in the press release): Bertie Ahern featured in all news-stories; Dermot Ahern and Conor Lenihan were quoted in longer news stories but generally were excluded from shorter pieces.

Moving outside the parameters of easily available sources and supplied information was the exception rather than the norm in the coverage. The *Irish Times* was most likely to venture outside these parameters. It engaged in the greatest detail with the substance of the White Paper. It also carried a number of quotes, as reaction,

from a Labour politician and members of various aid agencies, and it cited the perspectives of an academic. Further, it carried a comment from Liz O'Donnell of the Progressive Democrats that a White Paper was unnecessary because a full review of Ireland's overseas aid programme had taken place five years previously.

No newspaper carried a quote from anyone based in a 'programme' country.

Overall, our study suggested that the media was a weak filter of the frames encoded in the press release and promoted by government sources at the press conference. In transmitting the frames, the media generally did not challenge or question their underpinning assumptions: what it meant to be Irish in the 21st century, the OAB as reflecting Ireland's rich economy, and the country's potential to become a global leader in development. The *Irish Times*, alone, situated the White Paper in the context of previous aid commitments and raised questions about the Government's capacity to meet future commitments.

Framing of the OAB in the Post-Celtic Tiger Era

In 2008 the Irish economy fell into recession. The changed economic context illustrated sharply the limitations of the print media's coverage of the White Paper two years earlier. Focused on the immediacy of the document's publication within the context of a strong national economy, the media generally reported the government's future commitment – €1.5bn, 0.7% of GNP annually – as both a fixed sum and a fixed target. This created a distortion: 0.7% of GNP was a fixed commitment; the sum €1.5bn was a projection, vulnerable to changes in GNP. The distortion transmitted by the media originated with the Department of Foreign Affairs press release, in which the flexibility of the sum was suggested by a weak qualification: 'Reaching the 0.7% of GNP target of expenditure on overseas aid will mean spending *in the order of* €1.5 billion annually by 2012' (authors' italics).

The nuance was fudged in the media coverage. The *Irish Sun* (19 September 2006) reported: 'Ireland will be spending €1.5bn a year on overseas aid by 2012, the Government promised yesterday.' On the same day, the *Irish Daily Mail* carried the headline: 'Irish aid target set at €1.5bn.' And the *Irish Times* wrote: 'Ireland will spend more than €1.5bn a year on overseas aid by 2012.'

With the deterioration of the economy and GNP in 2008, €1.5bn no longer remained a credible projection for 2012. Such was the scale and speed of the economic corrosion that the shorter-term projection of GNP for 2008 was also off-track. The government had detailed a series of incremental rises in the years leading to 2012 to reach its target percentage of GNP. The target for 2008 was about 0.56%. However, with the economy in recession, the amount of money originally ear-marked for the OAB was rising above that figure as a percentage of GNP.

In this context, in July 2008, the government announced a 'reduction' in the OAB and the media reported a 'cut'. In response to the recession, the government introduced a number of measures to produce €440m in 'savings', of which €45m would come from the OAB. The decision left the media trying to reconcile a scenario that had been neglected in 2006: that the government could reduce, in real terms, the amount of money in the OAB and still remain on course to meet its commitments as a percentage of GNP. By now, the figure of €1.5bn – so prominent in headlines and lead paragraphs two years earlier – was absent from government communications and media reportage.

The 'reduction' was a small proportion of the €914m allocated to the OAB at the time. A difficulty, though, was measuring whether it also represented a fall as a percentage of GNP. The 2006 fudge on whether the government's commitment was to a fixed sum or to a percentage of GNP persisted in the media's initial response to the 'reduction'. In 2006 the media quoted government sources as speaking of the 'obligation' to give; in 2008 the media prioritised NGO sources arguing for the 'principle' of not taking away.

With two sets of institutional sources competing to frame the OAB 'reduction', the media shifted its approach from the consensus reporting of 2006 to conflict and oppositional reporting in 2008. In news stories, government sources generally were cast as defensive respondents. NGO reaction was likely to be positioned as the lead quote and accorded moral authority.

However, the struggle to frame the OAB was between three broadly aligned actors, not two: government sources, NGO sources, and the media itself. The struggle was evident in the recurring words used by government sources (reduction, savings, preserve), NGOs (principle, appeals, disappointed, expresses disappointment), and the media (cut, cutback, chopped, slashed, shaved, under the knife).

As the economy fell farther during the year, the government continued to defend and reaffirm its commitment to reaching 0.7% of GNP by 2012. However, it introduced a malleability in how it would reach the final target: first, government sources claimed that 'reductions' in 2008 and 2009 did not represent a retreat on the overall commitment as long as the 2012 target was delivered; second, government sources argued that smaller amounts of money in the OAB could be justified on the basis of falling GNP.

However, the framing of the OAB continued to be tethered to the immediacy of Ireland's prevailing economic condition. In 2006, in a strong economy, the OAB was framed as status and wealth. In July 2008, in the first raft of cutbacks after years of plenty, the OAB 'reduction' was framed through government defence of its commitment and NGO hostility and criticism. By October 2008, the national economy had worsened: a further, albeit smaller 'reduction' in the OAB in the national budget was framed as the government showing restraint.

The national budget reduced the OAB by €9m for 2009. The media drew on press releases from Concern and Trócaire to frame the decision as an affirmation of the government's commitment to its aid programme in a rough economic climate. (Although the press releases also acknowledged that any reduction of money in the OAB was regrettable.) Media coverage, by this stage, was more attuned to the government having committed to a percentage of GNP that would fluctuate as the economy did.

Again, the dominant news-frames originated with institutional sources and in information supplied to the media. The government remained the primary supplier of information and, particularly, of authoritative sources. The four most prominent government sources were Minister for Finance Brian Lenihan, Taoiseach Brian Cowen, Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin, and Minister for Overseas Development Peter Power. Competing NGO frames tended to emerge from press releases issued by GOAL, Concern, Trócaire and Oxfam Ireland in July, and from Concern and Trócaire at the time of the national budget in October. Quotes from representatives of NGOs, e.g. GOAL director John O'Shea, were usually sourced from press releases.

In reporting the OAB 'reduction' as news, the media was not a passive transmitter of frames from institutional sources. Through selection and prioritisation of supplied information and institutional sources, the media moulded the competing frames of government and NGOs into conflict. The pattern of media selection and prioritisation of frames tended to favour the NGOs as sources, particularly in July and August. NGO sources were more likely to be cast as lead sources and the government as defensive respondents. By October, with the economy worsening, the frames emerging from NGO sources were less critical of government decisions. This was reflected in the media coverage for the remainder of the year, with conflict being a weaker narrative force in articles. Throughout the sample of coverage, however, the government, NGOs and the media itself were actors engaged in the co-construction of what was presented to the public as news.

The media coverage for each month of the study is summarised below:

July 2008:

On 8 July the government announced €440m in 'savings', of which €45m would come from the OAB. The *Irish Times* (9 July), across four news-stories, used the words 'reduction', 'savings', 'cut' and 'cutback' to describe the impact on the OAB. The newspaper linked the reduction in the OAB to the reduction in GNP. It carried a quote from the Minister of Finance, Brian Lenihan, who argued that the OAB would still reach 0.56% of GNP in 2008. The newspaper also quoted Taoiseach Brian Cowen as saying the cutbacks were a 'downpayment' that would protect future commitments.

The government sources were balanced with reaction from NGOs. In its main news story focused on the OAB, The *Irish Times* led with quotes from two NGOs condemning the decision. GOAL director John O'Shea, who prior to the announcement had spoken of the 'principle' of not taking money away from the OAB (*Irish Independent*, 5 July), described the government's move as 'morally indefensible'. Colin Roche of Oxfam Ireland argued that the poorest of the poor should be the last to be hit with such cuts. The quotes were sourced from press releases issued by GOAL and Oxfam Ireland on 8 July.

The *Irish Examiner* (9 July), across two news stories, reported that €45m was being 'shaved' and 'cut' from the OAB. The newspaper quoted Minister Peter Power as arguing that the decision did not 'dilute' the government's commitment, and that the targets of 0.6% of GNP for 2010 and 0.7% target for 2012 would still be met. The quote was sourced from a Department of Foreign Affairs press release. The press release did not mention the amount of the 'reduction'. Instead, it referred to how 'decisions' taken that day would protect future resources available to Irish Aid.

The *Irish Independent* (9 July) reported the government as having 'slashed' €45m from the OAB. Its main news-story on the OAB led with quotes from John O'Shea condemning the decision. The quotes were sourced from a GOAL press release issued on 8 July.

The next day, the *Irish Sun* (10 July) described the OAB as having been 'slashed'. It carried a further condemnation by John O'Shea of the government's decision. The quote was sourced from a GOAL press release issued on 9 July.

The *Irish Times* (10 July) quoted former President Mary Robinson as opposing the reduction of the budget. She said that maintaining the commitment was a 'litmus

test' for the country, and it should stick to its 'principles'. The news-story led with Robinson and it cast as a defensive response the government's assertion that, even without the €45m, the OAB would exceed the projected percentage of GNP for the year.

August 2008:

In a news-story on funding to the Rapid Response Corps, the *Sunday Tribune* (10 August) referred to 'savings' of €45m in the OAB. A spokesperson for the Department of Foreign Affairs linked the funding to 'value for money'.

The *Irish Independent* (28 August) reported that Minister Peter Power was unable to guarantee that the OAB would not be cut. To coincide with the publication of Irish Aid's annual report, Power was quoted as arguing that, because the OAB was tied to GNP, the 2012 target could be met without providing additional funds. The newspaper highlighted that the government's pledge of reaching 0.7% of GNP had been broken before.

The *Irish Examiner* (28 August) also reported that Power 'refused to rule out' cuts to the OAB. Again, the Minister emphasised that the budget was tied to the prevailing economic conditions as a percentage of GNP. The news-story, through quoting Power, also referred to the OAB as representing 'taxpayers' money'. The news-story quoted the Taoiseach as arguing that the overall goal was fixed, but the incremental increases to reach it were malleable: 'He [Cowan] indicated that the next few budgets may not see the increases promised to reach that goal.'

September 2008:

The *Irish Examiner* cast the government as defending its 'credibility' on aid commitments ahead of a UN meeting in New York on international efforts to halve world poverty by 2015. On the 26 September, it described the OAB as a 'major loser' in the July round of spending cuts. It wrote: 'Foreign Affairs Minister Micheál Martin insisted the Government's credibility at the UN is intact despite slashing €45m from the Irish overseas aid budget in July.' The newspaper quoted the Taoiseach as saying that the 2012 commitment remained intact but intervening overseas budgets may not rise by as much as promised.

October 2008:

The government brought forward the traditional November national budget to October in response to the deteriorating public finances. In its pre-budget coverage, the *Irish Times* (7 October) wrote that a fall in GNP would probably be reflected in a fall in the OAB. It also reported the Taoiseach as re-affirming the government's commitment to the 2012 target of 0.7% of GNP.

The *Irish Times* (14 October) reported that the OAB would 'fall' by €14m in 2009. However, as a percentage of GNP, the level of spending would equal that of 2008. The following day, the newspaper (15 October) reported that the government remained on track to meet its incremental commitment of 0.56% of GNP for 2009.

October marked a shift in the tone of coverage. The national economic situation had worsened significantly since July, and there was little of the hostility to the 'fall' in the OAB that was evident with the €45m 'reduction' three months earlier. The *Irish Examiner* (15 October) reported the reaction of Trócaire Director Justin Kil-

cullen, who praised the government for holding to its aid commitments despite the recession. However, the newspaper also reported a qualification from Concern chief executive Tom Arnold, who said the national budget still represented a cut in the amount of money Ireland was spending on overseas aid. The quotes originated in press releases issued by Trócaire and Concern on 14 October.

November 2008:

The *Irish Times* (5 November) reported that the OAB would receive 'only minor cuts' in 2009. It added that, even with less money (€891m), the OAB would rise as a percentage of GNP. The newspaper noted, also, how the social partners, ICTU and IBEC,³ were positive towards maintaining the Irish Aid budget amid cutbacks in other areas. The news story highlighted that the projected 0.56% of GNP, if held, would be a record.

Alone in the print media, the *Sunday Tribune* (9 November) argued that the government should have implemented deeper cuts to the OAB. In an editorial, the newspaper criticised the government for cancelling a programme to vaccinate 12 year-old girls against cervical cancer. It identified others areas in which cuts could have been made, including 'cutting back on the overseas aid budget, which has remained generous and untouched'.

December 2008:

In a news review of the year, the *Irish Times* (29 December) noted, again, how the OAB had received only 'minor cuts' in the national budget, even though 'many in the development sector awaited the October budget with some trepidation'. It added that the government remained on track to meet its 2008 increment as a percentage of GNP.

Concluding Comments

The coverage of the White Paper in 2006 and the OAB 'reduction' in 2008 raises significant questions about the Irish print media's relationship to institutional sources and the dynamic of how news and public debate are framed. In particular, the coverage highlights the media's dependency on the government and other institutional bodies as suppliers of information and authoritative sources. Such information subsidies to the media tend to be encoded with frames aligned to an institutional source's sectional interests or ideological biases.

The media, in our study, was a weak filter of such frames. This created a situation where, instead of performing a watchdog function of challenging and questioning institutional sources, the media acted as a transmitter of pre-packaged frames. This was most notable in news stories based on re-written press releases.

A key function of a journalist is to draw on their professional judgement to question institutional sources to disclose information in the public interest. However, control of this function is ceded when journalists repackage supplied information as

³ ICTU is the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. IBEC is the Irish Business and Employers Confederation. In certain contexts, they are referred to as the social partners. In the late 1980s, with the Irish economy in recession, the Government, the trade unions and employers' groups came together in a process known as social partnership to negotiate a national wage agreement and to formulate measures to support economic growth. Seven such Social Partnership Agreements have been reached since 1987. The current agreement is Towards 2016.

news. The consequences of this are significant. Press release quotes do not originate from a journalist asking a question; the quote is based on what the institutional source wants the public to know; and a quote encoded with frames aligned to the institutional source's sectional interests may pass unfiltered through the media and to the public.

In coverage of the White Paper, the media acted as a weak filter of frames set by government sources. Commonly, journalists did not question institutional sources directly but lifted quotes from prepared speeches or, more often, from the press release. The press release and prepared speeches framed the White Paper as representing Ireland's wealthier economic status, with subordinate frames relating to the values of being Irish and the country's enhanced international standing. The frames encoded in the press release and supplied-information, and the assumptions underpinning them, passed with little resistance through the media and out to the public. The *Irish Times*, alone, questioned Ireland's capacity to reach 0.7% of GNP when a previous commitment had been reneged upon.

With few dissenting voices, the 2006 coverage was consensual and facilitated a clear flow of information from government to the media and, finally, to the public. The 2008 coverage added a broad alignment of NGOs as a third actor in the co-construction of news. (This was an alignment that the media tended to present as a homogenised, united entity rather than as an NGO community comprising a broad range of social actors, views and development strategies, and with varying relationships to Irish Aid.) The media, through its prioritisation and selection of frames, presented the competing viewpoints of government and NGO sources as conflict in the OAB coverage in July. For that month, the media favoured NGOs, casting government sources as defensive respondents. By October, the government was being cast less defensively. However, the frames – whether defensive from government, critical from NGOs in July to September, or NGOs cautiously acknowledging government restraint in the remainder of the year – still tended to originate with the information institutional sources were supplying to the media.

Both samples orientated the OAB as an inward reflection on Ireland's economic condition. In 2006, in a strong economy, the OAB was framed as a symbol of wealth. In July 2008, in the first raft of cutbacks after a period of prosperity, the OAB 'reduction' was framed through the government's affirmations of its capacity to meet aid commitments and NGO hostility and criticism. By October 2008, the national economy had worsened: a further, but smaller 'reduction' in the OAB in the national budget was framed as the government showing restraint. The fluctuations in framing the OAB suggest the limitations of how the media report long-term processes through the prism of immediacy.

In both samples, the prevalence of quotes originating in press releases, and the relative lack of independently acquired quotes, raises questions about media diversity in Ireland: not in the number of media outlets operating, but in news content. Genuine diversity in news is difficult to achieve when journalists from different outlets gravitate to a narrow range of pre-packaged sources of information.

Post-Study

The deterioration of the Irish economy and the administration of the OAB are contemporary and ongoing issues. The struggle to frame the OAB has continued since

our study ended. In February 2009, as part of a drive to cut €2bn from public spending, the government announced a €95m reduction in the OAB. Although it is outside the scope of the current study, the authors scanned the media coverage surrounding the announcement. The frames originating with government sources had shifted considerably. They no longer promoted the defence of aid commitments holding as a percentage of GNP. Instead, government sources made the broader argument that Ireland remained a generous donor of foreign aid. The NGOs took up the frame of percentage of GNP to criticise the government, arguing that a reduction of €95m would drop the OAB from 0.56% to 0.53% of GNP for 2009. The frames transmitted in media coverage continued to originate with supplied information (mainly press releases) from government and NGO sources. A further cut of €100m in April's supplementary (emergency) budget reduced the OAB for 2009 to €696m, an estimated 0.48% of GNP, and a figure some €225m lower than had been in the budget when the government announced the first 'reduction' in July 2008.

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MEDIA DISCOURSES ON AUTONOMY IN DYING AND DEATH

Christina Quinlan

Introduction

THIS PAPER IS A SYNOPSIS of a research project designed to examine the representations of particular experiences of dying and death as represented in media consumed in Ireland. This media research is a small part of a large study commissioned by the Hospice Friendly Hospitals Programme, through the Irish Hospice Foundation. The large study, undertaken by a team of researchers from University College Cork and the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland, was tasked with the development of an ethical framework for health-care practitioners on patient autonomy in end-of-life care. Patient autonomy at end-of-life is the degree of autonomy or control dying patients, in hospitals and other care settings, have over their end of life experiences. The aim of this media research was to identify and analyse the ways in which different media deal with end-of-life issues in relation to patient autonomy.

Each year in Ireland there are approximately 30,000 deaths and two-thirds of those deaths occur in hospital, 40 per cent of them in acute hospitals (Hospice Friendly Hospitals Programme website). This is despite the fact that research conducted in Ireland has established that most people would prefer to die at home (O'Shea et al., 2002). Death in Ireland, as in other developed wealthy societies, occurs mainly in organised professional settings. For this reason, the general public is usually at one remove from the processes of dying and death, and knowledge of what happens at the end of life is often formed through assimilation of various media images and reports. In relation to media reporting of dying and death, it is the case that most end of life experiences are not considered newsworthy, and so, except for death notices, are not reported in the media. Only tragic or unusual or remarkable end of life experiences and deaths tend to be reported in the media in any great detail. The focus of this media research is on representations of dying and death in the media, and on media representations of particular experiences of dying and death.

Methodology

The methodology used in the media analysis was case study (see Cresswell, 1998). Two different case studies were developed. The first case study was a mixed-media analysis, where experiences of death represented in a range of media were examined. In the second case study, eight separate end-of-life scenarios were developed. Each of these eight cases was designed specifically to explore and inform a particular ethical issue in dying and death in contemporary clinical practice.

The Mixed Media Case

In the first case, the mixed media case, the media selected included films, books, TV documentaries and radio interviews. The media sources used were the television archive of RTE, used in particular for the *Prime Time* programme on the Leas Cross Nursing Home; *The Hospice*, by Yellow Asylum Films, a four-part series on life and death in St Francis Hospice, in Raheny, Dublin; the BBC TV documentary *How to Have a Good Death* presented by Esther Rantzen; and four films – *The Death of Mr Lazarescu* (Romania, 2007), *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (France, 2008), *The Sea Inside* (Spain, winner of the 2005 Academy Award for Best Foreign Film), *The Savages* (US, 2008). Three RTE radio interviews were also included: the first was an interview Marian Finucane conducted with Nuala O'Faolain (*The Marian Finucane Show*: RTE Radio 1, 12 April 2008), where they discussed O'Faolain's terminal diagnosis and impending death; the other two interviews were both conducted by Ryan Tubridy during his weekday radio programme on RTE Radio 1, one with a man whose wife had suffered a miscarriage (Wednesday, 10 October 2007), the other with two mothers of young children who had died from inoperable brain tumours (Monday, 2 February, 2008).

A public talk by Professor Regina McQuillan, Professor of Palliative Medicine, Beaumont Hospital, was included; it was given to a public audience in the Peacock Theatre, 16 October 2007, in conjunction with Marina Carr's play *Woman and Scarecrow*. Joan Didion's biography *The Year of Magical Thinking* was included. Finally two photographic exhibitions were studied: the award winning photographic essay by Australian photographer Kate Geraghty on the end-of-life assisted suicide experience of cancer patient John Elliot, *My name is John Elliot and I am about to die with my head held high* (see the *Sydney Morning Herald*: www.smh.com.au, see also *Irish Times*, 30 November 2007); and the photographic project of German photographer Walter Schels and his partner Beate Lakotta, *Life Before Death* (*Observer* 13 April 2008).

The Eight 'Cases'

The team of researchers from the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland and University College Cork working on the Ethical Framework project in collaboration decided on the 'cases'/scenarios to be included. The end-of-life experiences selected for inclusion were chosen because each represented a particularly pertinent case in terms of dying and death in contemporary healthcare ethics in Ireland; the overall purpose of the research into patient autonomy was, as stated above, to contribute to the development of an ethical framework for practitioners working with patients at end of life.

For data for the second case study, the eight cases, a sample of articles dealing with relevant issues from both Irish and UK newspapers were selected for analysis. A media database, Lexis-Nexis, was also used to develop the sample of articles. For each of the eight 'cases' 20 articles were selected from Irish newspapers and from UK newspapers sold in Ireland. This sampling procedure provided a total of 280 newspaper articles.

The cases are outlined below. Each was comprised of one or more different/related end-of-life experiences. The constraints of the journal article format, and in particular word count, preclude a detailed exploration here of the eight cases but this is available in the report of the research, from which this article is drawn (Quinlan, 2009).

- 1 *Persistent Vegetative State (PVS)*: This scenario encompassed three different cases, the 1995 Ward of Court case, the Tony Bland case and the Terri Schiavo case. Each of these three people ended their lives in a persistent vegetative state. In each case, the end-of-life experience was determined by the courts.
- 2 *Assisted Suicide*: This scenario encompassed the case of Rosemary Toole Gilhoolley, the case of Martin Barry and other assisted suicide cases. Each of the end-of-life experiences considered in this case was an experience of assisted suicide.
- 3 *Medical Futility*: The Charlotte Wyatt case. In the case of baby Charlotte Wyatt, Charlotte's parents petitioned the courts to compel medics to continue treating their baby daughter. The medics testified that the case was medically futile.
- 4 *Withdrawal of Treatment*: The 'Ms. K' Jehovah Witness case and other Jehovah Witness cases. Each end-of-life experience examined in the case involved either the refusal or withdrawal of treatment.
- 5 *Right-to-Die*: The Diane Petty case, the Ronald Lindsey case and the Ms B case. In this case, each of the end-of-life experiences examined was a right-to-die experience.
- 6 *The Leas Cross Nursing Home saga*: The Leas Cross Nursing Home was a private nursing home in Swords in North County Dublin. It opened in the late 1990s and closed in August 2005 shortly after RTÉ's Prime Time documentary. The Prime Time documentary, with the use of a hidden camera, exposed abuses of elderly residents in the nursing home. A subsequent investigation by the State (www.hse.ie) found that there was 'institutional abuse' and the home was quickly closed down.
- 7 *The Organ Retention case*: This case involved the retention by hospitals of the organs of children who died in the hospital, without the knowledge or permission of next-of-kin. Some of the organs were kept for research purposes and some were sold to pharmaceutical companies (Madden Report: 2006).
- 8 *The Evelyn Joel case*: Mrs Evelyn Joel, who had multiple sclerosis, died a few days after she had been taken to hospital by ambulance from her daughter's home in Wexford. Mrs Joel's condition on removal to hospital was described in the media as critical; she was reported to have been malnourished, dehydrated, and unkempt. Mrs Joel's daughter and son-in-law were subsequently charged with her manslaughter.

Findings of the Mixed Media Case

Three major themes emerged from the analysis of the mixed-media case: the first theme to emerge was that of mediated representations of good and bad deaths; the second theme to emerge was one of culture and society, and the implications for culture and society of the death and dying experiences represented in the media; the final theme to emerge was that of the plight of the individual. In the following paragraphs each of these themes is explored.

Theme One – Mediated Representations of Good and Bad Deaths

The stories told in the media were stories of people caught up sometimes suddenly and always tragically in experiences of severe illness and/or death. The articles examined detailed in general the story of one death or, at most, two deaths. Almost all of the deaths were unwelcome, two were not. The two deaths that were not unwelcome

were both assisted suicides: Dr John Elliot's death which occurred in the Dignitas Clinic in Switzerland; and Ramon Sampedro's death, assisted by a friend, following a failed 30-year legal battle in Spain to win the right to end his life. The unwelcome deaths were represented as dreadful even cataclysmic events. They were sudden in some cases. They were tragic when they were untimely, as when children or young people died. The deaths as they were represented in the media were experienced differently by the (lay) individuals at the centre of the experience, the dying individuals and their families and friends, and the (professional) individuals managing the experiences within institutions. For the professionals, the deaths were represented as regular and routine everyday experiences.

Within the media representations there were good deaths and there were bad deaths. Professor Regina McQuillan in her talk in the Peacock Theatre (16 October 2007), discussed the notion of 'the good death'. She said a good death was dependent on where you die and how you die. In the best circumstances she said, a good death happened at home. As well as good and bad deaths there were scandalous deaths. Among the scandalous death were those deaths and end-of-life experiences reported on in the RTÉ Leas Cross Nursing Home documentary. Among the deaths narrated in the documentary was the death of Dorothy Black an older resident who had died in the Nursing Home 'by medical misadventure'. A report in the *Irish Mirror* newspaper (5 July 2005), reported that the inquest into Dorothy Black's death heard how the 73-year-old 'was left to develop bedsores the size of melons which penetrated to the bone. She died of blood poisoning and complications caused by the bedsores'.

The analysis clearly showed that good deaths happened at home, at the end of a long fulfilled life, among loved ones. Bad deaths happened at the end of short lives. Bad deaths occurred in institutions which were uncaring or even cruel and neglectful. In addition to the oppositions represented in the media of good deaths and bad deaths, there were stories of individuals versus institutions, and there were the very great differences between the experiences of dying and death as they were experienced by lay people, as opposed to how they were experienced by clinicians and other healthcare professionals.

Theme Two – Culture and Society

A peculiarly Irish attitude to death was evident in the articles. It was evident in particular in stories from other, different, cultures. Issues of identity and belonging are often, according to Woodward (1997), signified through difference. The Irish attitude to death and dying was, for example, evident in McQuillan's assertion (Peacock Theatre: 16 October 2007), that 'there is a frankness about death in the UK and the US that is absent in Ireland'. 'We are not', she said, 'so open about death here'. The Catholic nature of much of Irish spirituality was evident. It was evident in the response of one mother to the terminal cancer in her young daughter Rachel (Tubridy Show, 4 February 2008). She spoke of trips to Lourdes, to Medjugorje, to Rome for a meeting with the Pope, in search of a miracle that would save her daughter's life.

The multicultural nature of Irish society was also evident. It was evident in McQuillan's discussion of Irish Travellers and their experience of hospice. McQuillan said that Irish Travellers, unlike Irish people generally, did not like to die at

home (Peacock Theatre, 16 October 2007). She talked about how Travellers would traditionally leave a place where one of their community died. She detailed how they would burn all of the person's belongings, even burn the dead person's trailer. She said that in the history of the Irish hospice only two Travellers had died in a hospice, both in 1999, with none since. She quoted one Traveller as saying: 'Now that we know what kind of place it is, we wouldn't want anyone to go there. It's a place without hope, and Travellers can't live without hope.'

Irish society is now a multicultural multi-ethnic society. While the Traveller response to death and dying evidences the need for an understanding and awareness around different cultural needs in terms of death and dying, the increasingly multicultural nature of Irish society emphasises this need.

The RTÉ *Prime Time* Leas Cross Nursing Home documentary evidenced different and sometimes opposing familial, professional, and legal cultures. One of the people particularly profiled in the documentary was Peter McKenna (see also *Irish Times*: 18 June 2007). Peter McKenna had Down Syndrome and Alzheimer's disease. He was 60 years old. He was moved from his home in St Michael's House where he had lived for 23 years, to the Leas Cross Nursing Home. He was moved against the express wishes of his family. In response to the opposition of Peter's family to the move, St Michael's House applied successfully to the courts to have Peter, who was a ward of court, moved. Peter died 13 days after the move; the cause of death was recorded as septicaemia. The RTE TV documentary evidences one of the most pronounced discourses in the Irish media, that of uncaring and often cruel institutions, and the plight of individuals being cared for within them.

In relation to this theme of individual biography, Rantzen opened the BBC documentary *How to Have a Good Death* with a reflection on the death in hospital in 2000 of her husband Desmond Wilcox. Rantzen talked in the documentary about how the hospital intruded into that experience of death, about how she could not get close to her husband because of the medical team about him, about how she could not hold him as he died because that would have interrupted the smooth running of the organisation and the work routines and patterns of the institution. Communication was one of the key issues highlighted again and again in the media in relation to hospitalised end-of-life experiences. This issue of communication was examined by Rantzen. Rantzen talks of people dying in pain, she talks of poor communication from medical staff. The lay people who feature in the documentary talk about the dependency that patients in hospitals have on medical staff for information regarding their condition(s). One woman said:

Nobody really explained to us what was going to happen.

No one of the medical staff ever discussed with us, any of us, the fact that death was a possible outcome.

You need the medical staff to be honest, to tell the truth.

Doctors and Nurses are trying to cure people. So death is seen as a failure.

The theme of emotion was a difficult theme, in particular for clinicians working with patients at end-of-life. One of the doctors who participated in the BBC documentary said that he had always conducted his engagement with sick and dying people with a focus on avoiding emotionality, avoiding tears. The doctor said: 'I used to judge

how I gave them bad news in terms of whether or not they cried. I now know that tears and crying is an appropriate response to devastating news.'

With regard to the clinical care for dying people Elias (1985), more than 20 years ago, asked:

What does one do if dying people would rather die at home than in hospital, and one knows that they will die more quickly at home? But perhaps that is just what they want. It is perhaps not yet quite superfluous to say that care for people sometimes lags behind the care for their organs.

According to Rantzen, the cultural societal taboo around death is such that doctors don't know what patients want, because nobody talks about it. The suggestion in the documentary is that because we keep death out of sight and out of mind, the processes of death are strange to us and quite frightening. This experience of death as strange and frightening is evident throughout the media analysed for this project. It is evident in reactions to the photographic work of both Kate Geraghty (see, for example, *Irish Times* 30 November 2007) and Walter Schels (see Wellcome Collection, www.guardian.co.uk), work which appears generally to be viewed at best as extraordinary, at worst as intrusive, and almost always as ethically problematic.

Figure 1



'My name is John Elliot and I am about to die with my head held high',
photographer Kate Geraghty, *Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper.

Theme Three – Individual Biography

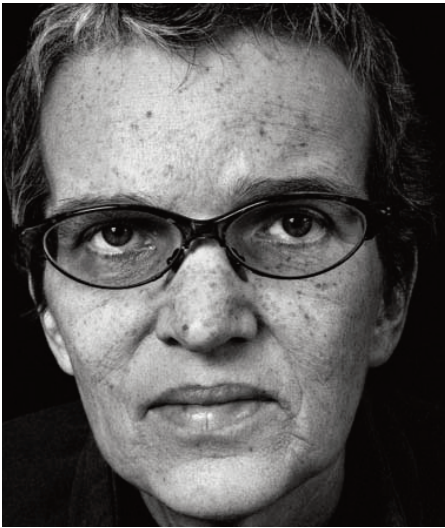
The final theme to emerge from the mixed media analysis was the theme of individual biography. Perhaps this theme is related to the rise of individualism in society generally, or perhaps it is related to the profoundly individual existential moment the experience of death and dying presents for all of us. For sociologists, the individual and the experience of the individual in relation to society are key, the study of the individual in society, the individual biography lived out against a backdrop of history. We are all historically situated. Our experience is ours in part because of who we as individuals are, and it is in part ours through our historical positioning, our situating within social structures. The sociologist C Wright Mills (1959) developed the concept of the sociological imagination which he used to describe the process of linking individual biographies with history, with social institutions and structures.

The sociological imagination is very useful in this theme of individual biography, and the end-of-life experiences of individuals in institutional settings. Elias in his reflection on medical sociology in the context of death and dying (1985) discussed the importance in medicine of treating the person within whom all organs are integrated, the integrating person, rather than treating his or her organs in isolation. He writes of the ‘rational institutionalisation of the dying’, highlighting the work of Glaser and Strauss (1968), where the dying person receives the most advanced scientifically based medical treatment, and is managed within the rules and structures of a work setting, an institution. Institutions tend to be bureaucratic with internal struggles over power and control. In such places it is frequently responsibilities that signal and signify status. Into such settings come dying persons at their most critical existential moment.

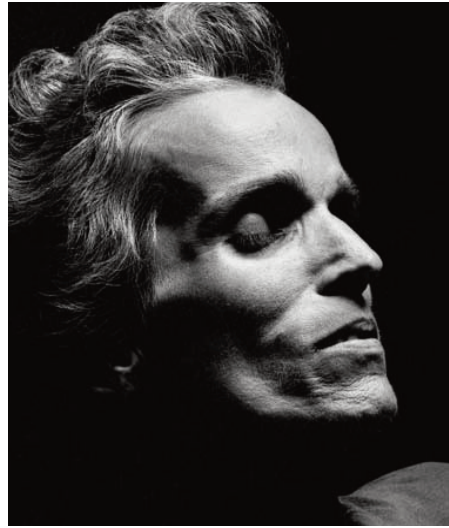
On the morning of Saturday, 12 April 2008, Nuala O’Faolain, a well-known Irish feminist, writer and journalist was interviewed by RTÉ journalist Marian Finucane, O’Faolain’s old and close friend, on the latter’s weekend radio show. The focus of the interview was the terminal diagnosis O’Faolain had just received, and her thoughts, feelings and beliefs regarding her own impending death. O’Faolain had been diagnosed with cancer six weeks earlier. O’Faolain explained how she had been walking in New York City, where she was living. She felt that there was something wrong with one of her legs and so she went into the Accident and Emergency (A&E) department of a local hospital. She described the chaos of that A&E. She said that the doctor who had examined her passed by her in the busy unit and he said to her, casually in passing, that she had two brain tumours. He also said that her brain tumours were secondaries, and that they (the medical team) needed to see where they (the tumours) were from. This was the first indication that O’Faolain had had that she was seriously ill. This was how her diagnosis of cancer was communicated to her. She said the same doctor later passed back and said to her, again casually and in passing, ‘yes, the x-rays show that you have lung tumours’. ‘In the middle of A&E?’ Finucane asked. ‘Yes,’ replied O’Faolain, ‘that was New York.’ O’Faolain died in the Blackrock Hospice in Dublin on 5 May 2008, less than four weeks after the radio interview. O’Faolain’s diagnostic experience clearly illustrates the gulf that lies between patients and healthcare professionals in experiences of dying and death.

The opposition found throughout the analysis was the opposition between routinised end-of-life experiences in hospitals, and the experiences of people caught up

Figure 2



Roswitha Pacholleck before death



Roswitha Pacholleck after death

Photographs: Walter Schels and Beate Lakotta/Wellcome Collection

in what is for them extraordinary, unique and often tragic end-of-life experiences. This hospitalised experience of dying and death is very different from the hospice experience of dying and death, as described in much of the media examined. It is different, for example, from the hospice experience of death presented by Rantzen in the TV documentary *How to Have a Good Death*; it is different from the hospice experience of death as presented in *The Hospice*, the documentary broadcast on RTÉ television; and it is different from the hospice end-of-life experience of Roswitha Pacholleck as depicted in the *Life Before Death* photographic project.

‘It’s absurd really. It’s only now that I have cancer that, for the first time ever, I really want to live,’ Roswitha told me on one of my visits, a few weeks after she had been admitted to the hospice. ‘They’re really good people here,’ she said. ‘I enjoy every day that I’m still here. Before this my life wasn’t a happy one.’ But she didn’t blame anyone. Not even herself. She had made peace with everyone, she said. She appreciated the respect and compassion she experienced in the hospice. ‘I know in my mind that I am going to die, but who knows? There may still be a miracle.’

In much of the media analysed for this study, the hospice experience of death and dying was presented as oppositional to experiences of death and dying in hospital. Hospital care tends to be critical care, focused on curing patients. Hospice care is palliative, focused on supporting patients through end-of-life experiences. In fact, the difference between the hospice experience of death and the end of life experience generally provided for in hospitals, as detailed in the media analysed, was substan-

tial, with hospitals tending to privilege institutional imperatives, medicine and technologies, and the hospice privileging the human and the personal in the experience.

Analysis of the Eight Cases

The main theme to emerge from the analysis of the eight cases was again that of private troubles being public issues. While we suffer end-of-life experiences individually and within family and friendship circles, each of these experiences is experienced within and through the structures provided within society for such experiences. In this way, the experiences are patterned, shared, and communal. In the following pages a brief synopsis of the analysis of each of the eight cases is presented (see Quinlan, 2009 for details of each of the cases and the detailed analysis).

Persistent Vegetative State cases: The three cases examined here are the cases of the 1995 Ward of Court, the Terri Schiavo case, and the case of Tony Bland. In each of the three cases, families or family members petitioned the courts to have feeding withdrawn so that the patient would die. The families were united in these requests in the case of the Ward of Court, and in the case of Tony Bland. Terri Schiavo's family were, as reported in the newspapers, divided and in opposition in respect of the request for the withdrawal of feeding. In the Ward of Court case, the only Irish case of these three cases, the issue as it was reported in the media was the decision of the Irish Supreme Court that a woman in a semi-persistent vegetative state could (legally) have food and hydration withdrawn. In 1995 the mother of the so-called '1995 Ward of Court' fought the case to the Supreme Court to win for her daughter the right to die.

Assisted Suicide Cases: The three cases selected for inclusion here were the cases of Martin Barry, Rosemary Toole Gilhooley, and Dr. Paddy Leahy. Martin Barry was 33 years old in 2005 when he travelled to the organisation Dignitas in Switzerland with a friend to end his life. He suffered from MS. He was interviewed on the Marian Finucane Show on RTÉ radio, and the interview was broadcast a second time on radio after his death. Most of the negative reaction to Martin Barry came from the Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Society of Ireland. Mr Barry was reported by the *Irish Independent* (11 May 2005), to be the fourth Irish person to have committed suicide with right-to-die groups since 2001. The same article reported that over 700 Britons were at that time registered with Dignitas. Rosemary Toole Gilhooley, at 48 years old, according to the *Irish Mirror* (5 November 2007), committed suicide in 2002 after a long battle with depression. The Rev George Exoo was with her when she died. Called Dr Death in the headline of that newspaper article, Exoo was accused of assisting in Toole Gilhooley's suicide. Dr Paddy Leahy died at home in his own home at 81 years of age. Prior to his death he had travelled to Thailand where the media reported he planned his own death through assisted suicide. Writing in the *Irish Times* in 2006 (16 May 2006), Pádraig O'Morain wrote that Dr Paddy Leahy was the only Irish doctor to declare publicly that he had helped people to die who were undergoing great pain and suffering from a terminal illness (see also *Irish Times* 18 December 1998).

The Case of Charlotte Wyatt: In this case, the hospital caring for baby Charlotte Wyatt petitioned the courts for permission to withdraw treatment. Withdrawing

treatment would mean that the baby would die. Charlotte's parents fought the hospital to the High Court. The court ruled that, given the weight of medical evidence, Charlotte should be removed from life support and allowed to die. In general, the newspaper headlines around this case suggested the hopelessness of the case:

'Doctors: we let "hopeless" babies die' (*Sunday Times* 18 June 2006), 'Charlotte Wyatt case: severely ill baby ought to be allowed to die, judge tells parents' 'Baby Charlotte is to be let die, rules UK court' (*Irish Times* 8 October 2004), (*Independent UK*: 8 October 2004).¹

Charlotte Wyatt was removed from life support, but she did not die. A very different headline appeared in the *Guardian* (24 November 2006), 'Parents of disabled newborns to be given a message of hope, not doom'.

The author of this article, journalist Jane Campbell, opened the article by stating that some people believe 'severe disability to be a fate worse than death'. She went on to dispute another journalist's claim that 'few would think this (Charlotte Wyatt's life) a life well saved'. The language (words and phrases) used in the article, for example, 'what is a tolerable life', 'the genocide of the less than perfect', evidences the heated debate around this case conducted in the media.

Withdrawal of Treatment Cases: the Ms B case, the Diane Petty case, the Ronald Lindsey Case, the 'Ms K' Jehovah's Witness case and other Jehovah's Witness cases: Ms B was the first person in Britain in full control of their mental faculties to have asked for and won the right to have medical treatment withdrawn when such an action would result in her death. Ms B had to go to court to establish her autonomy, her right to refuse medical treatment, because her wishes were contrary to the wishes and advice of her medical team. Ms B was reported to have died peacefully in her sleep after having been taken off the ventilator at her request, a month after she won her case (*Irish Times*, 30 April 2002). Ms K was a 24-year-old woman from the Democratic Republic of Congo who gave birth in the Coombe maternity hospital in Dublin. She said on admission to hospital that she was Roman Catholic and later, when in need of a blood transfusion, said she was a Jehovah's Witness, and could not, consequently, receive a blood transfusion. The hospital went to the High Court to secure an order allowing it to transfuse Ms K. The High Court granted the order. Ms K sued the hospital (*Irish Times* 5 October 2007, see also *Irish Sun* 14 December 2007). Ms K, in a counter claim, contended that the administration of the transfusion was a breach of her rights under the European Convention on Human Rights and that she was entitled to refuse such treatment. The *Irish Times* (5 May 2008), reported the judgement in the case of Fitzpatrick & Anor vs. K & Anor (the Ms K case).

The issue of patient autonomy, as evidenced in these newspaper articles, appears to be very contested in the tussles between Irish culture and other cultures, between the culture and ethic of care of Irish hospitals and the staff of those hospitals, and from a more mainstream Irish perspective, the often apparently strange and irrational choices and decisions of patients from other cultures. It seems from this analysis that

¹ Capitalisation, where used throughout this report, is copied directly from the referenced newspaper articles.

while the view of the Chair of the Medical Council's Ethics Committee is that patients, and their advocates, have the right to refuse treatment, the courts in Ireland, while referencing the need to respect patient autonomy, take leave to interpret that right.

The Case of the Leas Cross Nursing Home: The Leas Cross Nursing Home in Swords in North County Dublin opened in the late 1990's and closed in August 2005 shortly after RTÉ's *Prime Time* documentary. The documentary exposed abuses of elderly residents in the nursing home. The Leas Cross Nursing Home saga, which followed on foot of the documentary, produced tens of thousands of references in all of the databases considered for this research. Among some of the headings of newspaper articles were the following:

'Revealed: "appalling" care homes' (*Sunday Times*, 28 August 2006), 'Report calls Irish nursing homes "filthy and a danger' (*Daily Mail*, 26 October 2006), 'Get 'em out: health chiefs to tale elderly from house of horrors' (*Irish Mirror*, 21 June 2005), 'Horror home death probe: Inquiry into abuse at Leas Cross' (*Irish Mirror*, 5 July 2005), 'Inquiry ordered into deaths at scandal-hit nursing home' (*Irish Independent*, 5 July 2005), 'Steady rise in deaths unreported' (*Irish Independent*, 20 October 2005), 'Leas Cross Nursing Home paid ERU 5m by health services' (*Irish Times*, 28 December 2006, 'Report finds lower rate of survival of transfers to Leas Cross' (*Irish Times*, 19 October 2006), and finally 'A society that's caring less' (*Irish Times*, 04 June 2005).

In this institution patients were poorly treated or mistreated. In some cases the treatment the patients received hastened their deaths. The institution was represented throughout as neglectful and uncaring, and even callous and cruel. There were abuses of patients' rights; the right of patients to autonomy was rendered insignificant amidst the criminally low standards of care that prevailed in the institution.

The Organ Retention Scandal: The fact that organs were retained without the knowledge and permission of next-of-kin became public knowledge in Ireland in 1999. According to the Madden Report (2006), the views of clinicians and families regarding the practice of organ retention were irreconcilable. Doctors did not tell families because they felt the families were upset enough by the death of a family member. Families felt they should have and could have been told, because the worst had already happened to them, the worst being the death of their loved one. These experiences, as represented in the newspaper articles, again highlight a clear distinction between the shocking unique and individual experience of death and dying in hospital for the individuals, patients, families and friends, at the centre of the experience, and the routine everydayness of the experience for the hospitals' institutional structures and organisations, the work experience around hospitalised/institutionalised death and dying, and the experience of death and dying for clinicians and other hospital workers. A key theme to emerge in this case, a theme which was evidenced in other cases, was that of communication, the lack of communication between the hospitals and clinicians and the parents, families, and next-of-kin.

The Case of Ms Evelyn Joel: The final case studied for the research was that of Ms Evelyn Joel. The newspaper articles for this case were taken from the *Sun*, the *Irish Examiner*, and the *Irish Times*. According to the *Irish Sun* newspaper (29 March 2006),

Cops investigating the horror death of skin-and-bone granny Evelyn Joel handed a file to the Director of Public Prosecutions yesterday. Criminal charges could now follow in the “neglect” case that appalled the nation. Bedridden Evelyn, 58, died a week after being admitted to Wexford General Hospital on New Year’s Day. Gardai have spent three months investigating her death. The multiple sclerosis sufferer, who lived with her daughter Eleanor in Enniscorthy, Co Wexford, wasted away to little more than a skeleton. Confined to her bed since last September, she had become severely malnourished and dehydrated – weighing just 4st when she died. She was found covered in maggots and excrement in her bed.

The Health Services Executive (HSE) established an investigation into the case of Evelyn Joel. The investigation was to review the scope range and level of services provided to her from January 2004 to January 2006 (*Irish Times*, 24 July 2006). In 2007, Evelyn Joel’s daughter Eleanor Joel and her partner John Costin were charged with manslaughter and reckless endangerment in relation to the death of Ms Evelyn Joel (*Irish Times*, 11 January 2007, 29 March 2007, 18 April 2007, 07 November 2007). They both denied the charge. While Evelyn Joel’s relations were charged with criminal neglect, the evidence suggests that throughout her end-of-life experience, in an exercise of personal autonomy, she refused help, refused to engage with professionals charged with helping her, and refused to engage with professional services specifically designed for that purpose. This case raises the very complex questions around patient autonomy and the capacity of patients for autonomous decision making.

Conclusion

This media analysis was undertaken to identify and analyse the ways in which different media deal with end-of-life issues in relation to patient autonomy. A case study methodology was utilised in the research and the cases selected for inclusion in the research were selected because they informed particular and pertinent issues in contemporary healthcare ethics.

This analysis of different media and the ways in which they deal with end-of-life issues in relation to patient autonomy has shown patient autonomy to be a very fragile phenomenon. In hospital settings it has been shown to be secondary to institutional, medical and technical imperatives. In the hospitals involved in the organ retention scandal patient autonomy was entirely irrelevant; it was irrelevant too in the suffering experienced by patients in the Leas Cross Nursing Home. The capacity for institutions to override expressions of patient autonomy was demonstrated in the media reporting on the Ms B Jehovah Witness case and the Charlotte Wyatt case; while the potential complexity of patient autonomy was demonstrated in the media reporting the case of Evelyn Joel.

A major issue to emerge from the media analysis is that of the gulf between the understandings and experiences of the public generally of dying and death, and those

of clinicians and other healthcare professionals. This gulf is as a result primarily of the institutionalisation of dying in Irish and other western societies, and the removal of dying and death from everyday life. The narratives recounted in the newspapers signified above all the cultural chasm in experiences of dying and death between hospital and medical culture and the lives of ordinary people. The hospital end-of-life experience described in the media is in opposition to the hospice experience of end-of-life care: where in hospital the medical, technical and institutional take precedence, in hospice it is the personal that takes precedence.

In Ireland, ethical issues and dilemmas in hospitals are currently, regularly and frequently, referred to the courts for judgement and resolution. Each case is heard individually in different courts by different judges, and each case must be argued on its own merits. The obligation for clinical teams is the preservation of life. For patients, the issue is often the challenge to be heard, the capacity to express, by some means, autonomous wishes and to have those wishes acted upon. As evidenced by this media analysis, patient autonomy is a very fragile right, guarded, and subject always to representation and interpretation, within institutions and by medical and legal professionals, as well as by the media.

AUTHOR

Dr. Christina Quinlan's background is in social research; her PhD was a critical ethnography of women's experiences of prison in Ireland.

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- In addition, selected media were used in this research. They are referenced throughout the article

THE IRISH PUNDITOCRACY AS CONTRARIAN VOICE: Opinion Coverage of the Workplace Smoking Ban

Declan Fahy

THE JOURNALISM OF COMMENTATORS and columnists has remained a lacuna in media studies. Their work has received so little sustained critical attention that it has become something of a 'black box', even as the space devoted to opinion coverage in newspapers has expanded significantly over the past three decades (Duff, 2008: 230; Bogart, 1985; Glover, 2000). The section of the newspaper devoted to opinion journalism has traditionally been the op-ed page, so-called because of its usual placement opposite the section containing editorials. Viewed as a forum for the articulation of diverse viewpoints about current social issues, the page aims to provide a space in the 'marketplace of ideas' for the expression of opinions not found in news and editorial sections of newspapers (Salisbury, 1988 cited in Day and Golan, 2005: 61).

This page has been virtually ignored in mass communications research, however. (Day and Golan, 2005; Ciofalo and Traverso, 1994). The few topics addressed in studies of op-ed content have included the advertisements printed there (Brown et al., 2001), the public relations strategies used to argue stances on specific issues (Smith and Heath, 1990) and the political preferences between publishers and editorial page editors (Kapoor and Kang, 1993). A study that examined the op-ed pages of the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* found limited diversity in the selection of sources and stances in discussions of gay marriages, affirmative action and the death penalty (Day and Golan, 2005).

There has been little critical agreement on how to define more precisely the collective of opinion writers that contribute to the op-ed page. One of their number, David McWilliams, categorised them as 'the commentariat ... the aristocracy of commentators, opinion makers and editorial writers' (2005: 18). The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* defined op-ed writers as a punditocracy: 'an elite or influential class of experts or political commentators' (Soanes and Stevenson, 2008). Duff defined the punditocracy more narrowly as columnists writing about politics (2008). Hitchens conceptualised the role of the generalist writer as being a free-thinking or intellectual contrarian, although he noted this role has been often described using pejorative labels, including 'maverick', 'loose cannon', 'rebel', 'gadfly', 'iconoclast', 'fanatic', 'troublemaker', 'malcontent' or 'dissenter' (2001: 1-3). Columnists are different from more traditional notions of the public intellectual, writers who are usually experts in one field, but have engaged consistently over time with various audiences outside their academic specialism (Collini, 2006).

While critical writing has neglected the contents of opinion journalism generally, there has been a broad consensus on the theoretical role of one type of opinion writer, the columnist, in a newspaper. Columnists comment in national newspapers on political affairs. They are generalists who move between frequently specialised topics that they present from their distinctive worldview. Columnists are part of an 'interpretative elite' that describes complex reality in ways that contribute to readers' evaluation of political issues. Columnists aim for scoops by interpretation. They earn their reputations and readerships through 'the boldness of their remarks' (Duff, 2008; Glover, 2000; McNair, 2000: 208; Young 2003; Tunstall, 1996: 180).

Columns do not fulfil the same functions, argued Holmes (2005), who divided them into five categories. There are: columns that build up geographic, political or socio-economic communities with shared interests; columns that use experts or famous or controversial writers for commercial reasons; columns that use writers to reinforce the publication's editorial viewpoint; columns that allow a writer to go against a paper's editorial position to create an impression of pluralism; and finally, columns that provide an extension of a dominant ideology, expressing views more extremely than those found in an editorial column.

Several leading UK columnists said their role was to defend the individual against the growing power of large-scale organisations and the increasing government interference in citizens' lives. The columnists said there has been a growing pressure to be more opinionated, and there has been a move away from the idea of the 'sage commentator' as the population becomes less deferential to traditional knowledge (Duff, 2008: 238).

The contribution of a columnist to a title's circulation has been uncertain. There has been no discernable difference in circulation when a columnist has left or was dismissed (Glover, 2000), yet it was estimated that the presence of a particular writer increased a title's sales by one per cent (Tunstall, 1996), and columnists have been frequently used in the promotion of particular titles.

The possible influence of columnists has been linked to the wider agenda-setting theories of media and the policy impact of journalistic coverage (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). A columnist's power in the public sphere has been linked to their 'themativity, the willingness to remain focused on a theme' (Duff, 2008: 242). The writers find and identify problems and issues but also 'convincingly and *influentially* thematise them, furnish them with possible solutions' so they are addressed by parliaments and government (Habermas, 1996 cited in Duff, 2008: 242).

Irish Opinion Writers: Ideologically Jaundiced or Preactionary?

The thematic concerns of columnists have been the focus of the very brief research within Irish journalism studies on opinion writing. David McWilliams, a columnist with the *Sunday Business Post*, argued in *The Pope's Children* (2005) that the Irish commentariat had under-reported the positive social effects of the expansion of the middle class that occurred during the Celtic Tiger years. The commentariat was an 'ideologically jaundiced' collective of left-wing writers that suffered from 'status neurosis', perhaps because their authority and values have been eroded by the mass 'upward social mobility' of the boom years (2005: 18). This argument was generalised from a single quoted *Irish Times* article.

In a more empirically grounded analysis, Titley (2008) found a consistent pattern of right-libertarian discourse among selected Irish columnists in their interpretations

of immigration policy. The writers surveyed included Kevin Myers, then of the *Irish Times* (he now writes for the *Irish Independent*), John Waters, *Irish Times*, and Ian O'Doherty, *Irish Independent*, as well as selected columns from the *Sunday Independent*. These commentators were not simplistically anti-immigrant. Instead, they agreed, with different levels of emphasis, that controlled migration was needed to prevent the unchecked influx of radicalised minorities that would create fundamental democratic change in Europe.

Titley characterised this writing as '*preactionary* discourse', a neologism that described a view that was not only reactionary but was 'a *pre-action*' based on the anticipation that policy elites would insist on pre-determined liberal responses to complex issues. These responses would restrict the opportunities for genuine pluralist debate. These imagined liberal orthodoxies have not been established in Ireland so the columnists' arguments were 'emblems of deeper currents of ideological worry' (2008: 95).

These columnists positioned themselves as speaking out against a perceived consensus of political correctness, a notion 'commonly invoked to suggest that honest conversations are being curtailed by a liberal establishment intent on imposing its beliefs on an unwilling public' (Younge, 2006: 31). The preactionary discourse of columnists studied by Titley displayed an 'anxiety of erosion' of traditional values. The discourse was inconsistent, contradictory and elusive. Their arguments were not empirically grounded and were presented instead as 'self-evident truths'. The columnists seemed to view themselves as 'visionary contrarians', with a constant desire to be 'positioned as victims of consensus' (2008: 107–08).

McWilliams and Titley are directly contradictory in their characterisations of Irish commentators: their studies conclude that opinion writers adopted either ideologically left-wing or right-libertarian perspectives. Although Titley was explicit in his choice of commentators to analyse, neither study addressed the potential diversity of viewpoints in newspaper commentary and McWilliams, in particular, presented the perspectives of the entire commentariat as uniform, reflecting perhaps a tendency to conceptualise commentary journalism as being a unified whole.

Commenting on the Workplace Smoking Ban

This paper presents an analysis of the opinion coverage of another contentious and multifaceted Irish policy issue, the workplace smoking ban, implemented on 31 March 2004. The decision to make Ireland the first European Union country to implement a law of this kind, the first national ban of its type in the world, was addressed in thousands of Irish newspaper articles from its first announcement by the then Minister for Health, Micheál Martin, in January 2003. Its enactment marked the culmination of decades of anti-tobacco campaigning and legislation (McElvaney 2004; Howell, 2004).

This paper aims to:

1. identify the dimensions of the ban that were explored by commentators;
 2. determine whether the areas of interest for opinion writers were the same as the areas explored intensively by news reporters and editorial writers;
 3. test whether a diverse range of viewpoints was expressed in commentary on the tobacco ban;
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4. examine whether the precautionary discourse identified by Titley (2008) in opinion writing on immigration emerged in the commentary of selected writers on a different policy issue;
5. examine if Irish columnists had an influence on the enactment of the smoking ban legislation.

This study analysed the writings of columnists as part of the wider journalism of commentary, which included opinion pieces written by newspaper reporters and invited contributors, who were usually experts in an area of public life affected by the tobacco legislation. This inclusive approach to what constituted opinion writing aimed to capture as many diverse viewpoints as possible, coding those opinions expressed, as in the OED definition of the punditocracy, the one used in this study, by ‘an elite or influential class of experts or political commentators’. The definition of the commentariat is the one used by McWilliams (2005): it expands the concept of the punditocracy to include editorial writers. Commentary pieces and opinion pieces are used as interchangeable terms in this paper.

Duff (2008: 242) noted that to prove whether columnists managed to thematise an issue, a study needed what he called ‘hard data’, which presumably meant quantitative data. This demand has been answered in the current study, which used content analysis as the principal method of analysis to examine opinion coverage in four newspapers, *Irish Times*, *Irish Independent*, *Ireland on Sunday* and *Evening Herald*, selected to represent a cross-section of the Irish newspaper market, with different target readerships and varying methods of presentation. The study’s timeframe was 20 months, from 30 January 2003 (the first public announcement of the legislation) to 30 September 2004 (six months after implementation). During this time, five three-month key episodes¹ were selected for analysis in depth, episodes that were estimated to yield rich data when analysed.

The analysis was informed by a theory of issue-framing, which acknowledged that the media have two main roles in the policy formation process: they inform the public about important national issues and they shape public thought about these issues through framing or characterising an issue in a certain way (Magzamen, Charlesworth and Glantz, 2001; Champion and Chapman, 2005; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Menashe and Seigel, 1998). The definition of issue-framing used in this study was taken from Nisbet and Lewenstein (2002), who wrote: ‘These media “frames” offer a centralising organising idea or storyline that provides meaning to an unfolding series of events, suggesting what the controversy is about, and the essence of an issue’ (2002: 361).

Based on framing typologies used in previous studies referenced above, this study categorised all opinion items into one of six frames – domains of public life with which the writers associated the ban exclusively or primarily. The frames were: 1. *democracy*: the ban was described as a democratic rights and civil liberties issue; 2.

¹ These five key episodes were identified through an examination of a pilot sample of newspaper material that aimed to show the changing levels of media interest in the smoking ban over the study’s timeframe. It was estimated that a close analysis of these time periods would yield rich data with which we could address the research aims effectively. The key episodes were: 1. The ban is announced (30 January–30 April 2003); 2. The opposition forms (30 May–30 August 2003); 3. Seeking public support (30 August–30 November 2003); 4. The ban comes into effect (28 February 2004–30 May 2004); 5. Publicans’ revolt (30 May to 30 August 2004).

economics: the ban was characterised as a policy affecting the hospitality trade, in particular, and the economy as a whole; 3. *health*: the ban was covered as a story of health effects on individuals, workers, and society; 4. *technical*: the ban was written about as a story of technical issues surrounding the ban, including the scope, implementation and enforcement of the legislation; 5. *politics*: the ban was covered as a political story with emphasis on the political actors involved and the lobbying efforts to influence policy; and 6. *society*: the ban was reported as a story of Irish societal change and Irish cultural habits.

There were 74 opinion articles coded in the key episodes over the study's timeframe and each was assigned a single frame, an approach that has precedent (Nisbet and Lewenstein, 2002; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Hansen, 1998). Each item was assigned a value stance: whether it was pro, anti, or neutral towards the ban. It was possible to assign all opinion articles to a frame and value stance to an acceptable level of reliability.² The opinion articles, comprising columns and invited writers, were a sub-set of a large content analysis of all genres of newspapers coverage of the ban: news reports, features, editorials and letters to the editor. The total sample comprised 1154 articles.

Results

1. Commentators focused on democratic, social and political issues more intensely than news reporters and editorial writers.

Table 1: Total Opinion Articles by Frame

<i>Frame</i>	<i>No. of opinion items by frame</i>	<i>Percentage of opinion items by frame (n = 74)</i>	<i>Percentage of news sample (n = 586)</i>	<i>Percentage of editorials (n = 39)</i>	<i>Percentage of total sample (n = 1154)</i>
Democracy	14	19	4	8	9
Economics	3	4	17	5	14
Health	6	8	8	28	16
Technical	4	5	47	31	31
Politics	28	38	15	23	16
Society	19	26	10	5	14
Total	74	100	100	100	100

The most significant frames through which opinion writers viewed the smoking ban were politics (38 per cent), society (26 per cent) and democracy (19 per cent) (see Table 1). All of these frames were represented more prominently in opinion coverage than in cov-

² Intercoder reliability was obtained between two researchers (the author and an external coder) using Cohen's kappa (k) using SAS software, version 9.1. Rosner (1995: 426) said a kappa rating above 75 per cent denoted 'excellent reproducibility', between 40 and 75 denoted 'good reproducibility', and below 40 per cent denoted only 'marginal reproducibility'. For issue-frames in this study, the k rating was 82 per cent, and for value stance the k rating was 75 per cent. All results were highly significant ($p < .0001$).

erage overall, in news reports, and in editorials. The democratic and society frames, in particular, were represented to a substantially higher degree in opinion articles than in news or editorials – indicating that these issues had a special appeal for commentators.

Commentary pieces coded under the democracy frame examined the legislation's effect on civil rights and civil liberties. These pieces also explored the tension between individual versus collective rights, and examined whether the law was a manifestation of a 'nanny state' government. These topics featured in the four per cent of total news stories coded under democracy, indicating they had little news value for journalists. These topics were the focus of eight per cent of editorials, showing the democratic dimension had more appeal for editorial writers than economic or societal aspects, but significantly less than the health, technical or political dimensions of the ban.

Opinion articles coded under the society frame featured discussions about the legislation's effect on Irish social and cultural life, including a perceived destruction of Irish social and cultural values. Opinion pieces coded under the society frame also featured contrasting arguments about whether the ban was a manifestation of political correctness or a piece of socially progressive legislation. These topics featured as most prominent in ten per cent of news stories coded under society, illustrating that these issues were more interesting to news journalists than the health and economic dimensions to the ban, but less newsworthy than technical, economic or political aspects.

The two most strongly represented frames under which news stories were categorised were technical (47 per cent) and economics (17 per cent), demonstrating their high news value for news reporters. However, these dimensions of the ban held little interest for commentators, as demonstrated by the comparatively minor presence of opinion items coded in these frames.

Although the opinion items were concentrated in the democracy, politics and society frames, the presence of commentary articles in all frames indicates that all dimensions of the ban coded in this study's framing typology were addressed by commentators.

The high concentration of opinion items coded under the political frame would seem to show that this was a significant terrain on which the issues surrounding the ban were argued. However, closer analysis shows that these commentary pieces were different to those coded under the democracy and society frames because, as the next section will demonstrate, they did not, for the most part, argue in favour or against the legislation *itself*. Instead, the ban was used as a political issue on which the performance of the Minister and the Government could be evaluated.

2. Commentators predominantly opposed the legislation, mainly on democratic grounds.

More opinion writers argued against the anti-tobacco legislation than argued in favour of it, as indicated by the value stance of each article (Table 2). The majority of opinion articles that argued in favour of the ban were coded under the health and society frames, mirroring the central characterisation of the ban as a worker health and public health issue by the Government and non-governmental organisations ASH Ireland, the Irish Cancer Society and the Irish Heart Foundation (Donnellan, 2003).

The majority of political commentary was not concerned with arguments for or against the legislation: just over two-thirds of the opinion articles coded under the

Table 2: Opinion Articles by Frame and Value Stance

VALUE STANCE	PRO-BAN		ANTI-BAN		NEUTRAL	
Frame	No. of Items	Percentage	No. of Items	Percentage	No. of Items	Percentage
Democracy	0	0	13	49	2	6
Economics	2	13	1	4	0	0
Health	4	27	2	8	0	0
Technical	0	0	3	12	1	3
Politics	2	13	4	15	22	67
Society	7	47	3	12	8	24
Total	15	100	26	100	33	100

political frame were neutral towards the ban. The articles largely focused on the handling of the ban as a measure of Micheál Martin's ministerial performance, the intra-Fianna Fáil dispute over whether the ban should be implemented, and the potential political problems the ban raised for the then Fianna Fáil-PD coalition government.

Irish Times political reporter Mark Hennessy, for example, wrote that 'in simple terms, Martin is betting his career on his proposal, because his political capital will not be worth a fag butt on the pavement if he does not get it through' (2003: 14). Similarly, Alison O'Connor in the *Irish Independent* noted: 'with the vagaries of the health brief as they are, the Corkman will want to leave at least one lasting impression from his time in the Department of Health' (2003:10). Sam Smyth in the *Irish Independent* said 'the grassroots have told rural TDs that the cabinet's refusal to consider any compromise [in the ban's scope] is as arrogant as it is intolerant' (2003: 14).

No opinion pieces argued in favour of the legislation on democratic grounds. Almost half of the commentary pieces that argued against the ban were coded under the democracy frame, indicating that this was an area of particular concern for commentators. Commentators whose articles were coded under the democracy frame, and as being against the ban, argued that the legislation was an infringement of smokers' rights, a manifestation of a "nanny state", and a restriction on civil liberties. Opinion articles coded under the society frame, and as being against the ban, argued it had harmed the traditional Irish way of life, manifested in the conceptions of the Irish pub, and was a form of extreme political correctness. Their specific anti-ban arguments will be analysed in the next section.

3. Anti-ban commentators used civil-liberties and individual-rights arguments.

This section presents a closer analysis of the 13 commentary pieces that were coded under the democracy frame and as being against the ban. A selection of writers across the four sampled newspapers argued consistently over time against the ban, and a rhetorical analysis of their arguments showed that their anti-ban arguments centred on individual rights and civil liberties issues.

Two commentators analysed by Titley (2008), Kevin Myers and Ian O'Doherty, argued against the smoking ban. Their persuasive appeals on this different policy terrain contained strains of preactionary discourse. O'Doherty argued in the *Irish Independent* that 'the crusade against smoking is merely the first front in a broader crusade against the things that the state and the intelligentsia have decided are bad for us' (2004: 13). Writing in the *Evening Herald*, he said 'given the fact that Martin is Minister for Health and Children, maybe he has become a little confused. Perhaps he should let some grown-ups deal with the big issues' (2003: 15).

Myers in the *Irish Times* said 'there are good libertarian grounds for arguing that pubs and restaurants should be licensed to allow smokers ... That is my choice; smokers, surely, are entitled to a choice of their own' (2003b: 13). In another Irishman's Diary column he wrote for the paper, he professed to detest smoking, but also asked, 'is there any real civil liberties lobby in Ireland at all? Do many people think that the State should not automatically have the right to decide whether or not people enter a pub at three in the morning or to enjoy a cigarette there?' (2003a: 15). In another article, he referred to 'anti-smoking zealots' and said 'the central issue about cigarette smoking is freedom. It's irrelevant whether or not it shortens your life-span' (2003c: 17).

Commentators in other newspapers echoed these arguments. *Ireland on Sunday's* Eamon Dunphy said that the ban 'made no provision for tolerance or common sense' (2003: 14). Writing on an aspect of the ban that would make it an offence to smoke in a company car, Dunphy noted: 'learning of this law my first reaction was disbelief' (2004: 17). In the same paper, Mary Carr said 'the blanket ban intentionally negates all choice and removes from us, as citizens, the onus of responsibility for our own lifestyle choices' (2004: 19). She referred to 'anti-smoking zealots' who have campaigned against 'social freedom' (2003: 17). David Quinn in the *Irish Independent* said the ban was a manifestation of the view that 'healthism' – the idea that people should all be healthy whether they like it or not – 'is fast becoming the new moralism' (2003: 11).

These selected commentators successfully thematised the smoking ban as a civil rights and civil liberties issue. Their opinion writing contained elements of preactionary discourse, specifically in their characterisation of the ban as being a product of a liberal political establishment, introducing legislation that was an affront to common sense and an unwanted encroachment on personal liberty.

4. Commentators presented a spectrum of viewpoints overall

These anti-ban opinion items have been analysed within the overall journalistic commentary on the legislation, which presented a vortex of competing viewpoints. The four newspapers published roughly similar numbers of opinion pieces on the ban, demonstrating that the overall sample of anti-ban commentary pieces was not due solely to a uniformly hostile view towards the ban in one paper. The data in Table 3 demonstrates the diversity between, and within, newspapers, regarding the stance of their opinion writers towards the ban. The opinion coverage in each publication contained mixed views towards the ban, but more writers argued against it than for it in *Ireland on Sunday*, the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Independent*. Only the *Evening Herald* published more pro-ban than anti-ban opinion pieces, making the paper –

Table 3: Value Stance Of Opinion Items in The Sampled Newspapers

<i>Newspaper</i>	<i>Total opinion columns on ban</i>	<i>Opinion columns for ban</i>	<i>Opinion columns against ban</i>	<i>Opinion columns neutral on ban</i>
<i>Irish Times</i>	18	4	5	9
<i>Irish Independent</i>	22	3	9	10
<i>Ireland on Sunday</i>	17	3	10	4
<i>Evening Herald</i>	17	5	2	10
Total	74 (100%)	15(19%)	26(35%)	33(45%)

which has a larger proportion of readers in lower socio-economic groups, and these groups tend to smoke more – predominantly pro-ban.

Columnists not only addressed the ban in articles coded under each available frame (see Table 1), but each newspaper also presented a diverse set of stances towards the ban, providing further evidence that a variety of viewpoints was accommodated by each publication. The amount of neutral opinion articles in each publication, with the exception of *Ireland on Sunday* perhaps, was explained by the emphasis on political commentary, a high proportion of which was value-stance neutral.

The pro-ban arguments were diverse and sometimes argued on the same democratic terrain as some anti-ban columnists. For example, Chris Lowry in the *Evening Herald* argued that the ban was socially progressive for Ireland: 'If the ban works, we will transform ourselves from a grimy provincial backwater to a role model for the western world' (2004: 14). Disparate views sometimes occurred in the same publication. Three days after a column coded as being anti-ban under the democratic frame by Ian O'Doherty, another column writer Alison O'Connor wrote in the *Irish Independent* of the 'joy of sipping your morning cappuccino without some smoking boor causing you to come out smelling like an astray at 11 am' (2004: 12). A representative piece of pro-ban commentary coded under the health frame was an article by Kathy Sheridan in the *Irish Times*. She argued that the scientific justification for the ban was overwhelming, writing that 'Big Tobacco's products kill ... and it kills the poor in disproportionate numbers' (2003: 14).

The cohort of anti-ban commentators were selected for analysis in depth in this study because they offered a chance to test whether the punditocracy, as per the OED definition, was an influential elite. Commentary pieces were predominantly anti-ban (see Table 3) and argued against the ban mainly on democratic grounds (Table 2). Across the four sampled papers, more columnists argued against the ban than for it, yet the legislation passed successfully without compromise or change to its initial scope. This offers evidence that the views of commentators were, ultimately, not influential in affecting the tobacco legislation's passage through the policy process.

5. Commentators did not always echo their paper's stance on the ban.

The stances of columnists towards the ban did not mirror consistently their papers' overall perspectives on the legislation. A newspaper's editorial column is regarded,

Table 4: Editorial Coverage of the Ban in the Sampled Newspapers

<i>Newspaper</i>	<i>Total editorials on ban</i>	<i>Editorials for ban</i>	<i>Editorials against ban</i>	<i>Editorials neutral on ban</i>
<i>Irish Times</i>	11	9	0	2
<i>Irish Independent</i>	10	3	1	6
<i>Ireland on Sunday</i>	3	0	3	0
<i>Evening Herald</i>	15	8	0	7
Total	39 (100%)	20 (51%)	4 (10%)	15 (38%)

by convention, as containing the publication's view on current matters in the public domain, and is usually written by specialist editorial writers or senior editorial executives on a newspaper. There were 39 editorials coded under this study, and there was a variety of perspectives on the ban between different publications and within an individual publication.

The figures in Table 4 show the *Irish Times* and the *Evening Herald* could be judged to be, editorially, in favour of the ban: neither ever argued against it in an editorial. The *Irish Independent* seemed to have a mixed stance towards the ban in its editorials, as its opinion writers did also, while *Ireland on Sunday* was uniformly opposed to the ban in its editorials, and in the majority of its opinion pieces.

More editorials overall argued in favour of the ban than against it, but as the previous section demonstrated, commentators on the smoking ban often adopted positions on the ban that were contrary to their paper's editorial line, illustrating again the importance of diversity in newspaper content across different sections and formats.

Discussion

This study demonstrated that the Irish punditocracy provided a variety of viewpoints on the smoking ban. The op-ed pages featured a mix of perspectives between, and within, the sampled newspapers. A further discussion of characteristics of commentary on the ban must be situated within this demonstrated plurality of opinion coverage.

The punditocracy concentrated on dimensions of the ban that featured less prominently in news reports and editorials, indicating that the professional role of commentators was to raise issues not featured in other journalism genres. The punditocracy fulfilled its function as an interpretative elite by focusing on large-scale, conceptual, thematic aspects of the ban that had implications for Irish public and cultural life. By approaching the ban from perspectives neglected by other news professionals, the punditocracy can be seen as having a contrarian role within the journalism.

This contrarian role emerged also in the predominantly anti-ban stance of commentators. The writers frequently took positions that were contrary to the Government that proposed the legislation and contrary to the editorial standpoints of the newspapers for which they wrote. This indicates that commentators see it as their professional role to adopt contrarian and controversial positions on current public issues.

Anti-ban commentators successfully thematised the ban under the democracy frame, characterising it chiefly as an individual rights and civil liberties issue. The columnists analysed closely in this study had a distinctive worldview. Like their

counterparts on UK newspapers, a coterie of Irish columnists seemed to have an ongoing preoccupation with guarding against what they view as the continued curtailment of personal liberty by a benign, but misguided, state motivated by a vague idea of political correctness.

The right-libertarian perspective held by Kevin Myers and Ian O'Doherty was not confined to their writing on immigration. A similar type of preactionary discourse emerged in their writings on the tobacco legislation. Like their imagined fear of the potential consequences of immigration, the smoking ban was presented as another manifestation of the expected unquestioning liberal response of the Government to emerging political issues. The study suggests that immigration policy and anti-tobacco legislation were comparable terrains on which their distinctive worldviews could be articulated. In addition, the writings of Eamon Dunphy and Mary Carr can be added to the list of commentators whose journalism can be interpreted using the useful analytic term of preactionary discourse.

It must be noted that the articles on the ban from these writers accounted for a small proportion of their overall journalistic output over the study's timeframe. Further research might examine their commentary on other issues to see whether the same worldview emerges. The columnists could also be interviewed in a structured or semi-structured format to examine how they conceptualise their journalistic role – and whether their self-reported views confirms or contradicts the current study's conclusions.

This study has supported empirically the view of Glover (2000: 295) that newspaper editors believe columnists are 'an ingredient in a mix, one element among many that make a successful newspaper'. Any claims to characterise the position on a single policy issue of the commentariat or the punditocracy *as a whole*, as McWilliams (2005) did, needs to be closely examined. The current study found no evidence for such a uniform stance of the Irish commentariat or the punditocracy on the smoking ban.

The study adds empirical evidence to categorisations of the punditocracy as a contrarian voice: contrarian in its journalistic role, contrarian in the issues it addressed, contrarian in the perspective taken by a majority of its writers, and contrarian in its perspectives compared to editorial writers. It is beyond the scope of this paper to determine the overall political impact of the Irish punditocracy, but as the pioneering anti-tobacco legislation was passed successfully, this study offers some evidence that claims about commentators' perceived influence may tend to be overstated.

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SIGNIFICANT TELEVISION: Journalism, Sex Abuse and the Catholic Church in Ireland

Colum Kenny

MOST CITIZENS OF THE Republic of Ireland describe themselves in their census returns as Roman Catholic, although attendances at church have been declining (O'Mahony, 2008:1). Irish Catholics long endured religious discrimination and persecution under British Protestant rule. Partly for that reason, the Irish media tended to treat the Catholic Church very respectfully or deferentially after the foundation of the independent Irish Free State in 1921 (Fuller, 2002; Inglis, 1998; Kenny, 1997). However, by the closing decade of the twentieth century, Ireland had passed through a period of rapid and remarkable change (Brown, 2004; Ferriter, 2005; Kenny, 2005). Economic, social and cultural factors made it more likely than before that Irish broadcasters would produce programmes critical of clergy and bishops.

Irish Catholics still make a major contribution to social and educational services in Ireland and abroad. However, during the twentieth century, some priests and members of religious orders physically and/or sexually abused children. They were not unique in this respect. Most child abuse is committed by lay people, including some parents, close relatives, teachers and sports coaches, and not all is committed by Catholics.

First Public Awareness of Irish Child Sexual Abuse

Irish television viewers frequently tune into the BBC and other British services and many were able to see, for example, a special edition of *Childwatch* presented by Esther Rantzen in 1986. This BBC programme marked the launch of the UK charity Childline and is said to have been '... a significant intervention into the issue of child abuse, particularly in relation to sexual abuse ... Its timing in late 1986 served both to raise public awareness but also to disturb many previously untouched sensitivities' (Parton, 1991: 93). Child sex abuse by priests was being reported extensively in the United States, from the mid-1980s, raising questions about the possibility of its occurrence elsewhere (Rossetti, 1996:5). According to an official report, commissioned by the Irish state (Ferns Inquiry: 12),

It is generally accepted that awareness of the nature of child sexual abuse in Ireland coincided with high profile cases such as the Kilkenny Incest Investigation in 1993 and The West of Ireland Farmer case in 1995. These cases demonstrated that child sexual abuse was a crime perpetrated by apparently upright and decent members of the community.

However, both of these cases concerned sexual abuse within the family. Evidence of systematic child abuse at Irish institutions first came to public attention not in the

Republic but in Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom. In the 1980s, the activities of paedophiles at the Kincora Boys Home, a Protestant institution in Belfast, were revealed and their ringleader, William McGrath, convicted. McGrath was not only a worker at Kincora but also, as it transpired in subsequent investigations, an influential political activist and agent of the British Intelligence service MI5. It is claimed by Foot (1989: 80—101) that some civil servants, Protestant ministers, politicians and security personnel were involved in a cover-up of what happened at Kincora. If so, then they escaped the legal consequences of their involvement. The scandal has been examined in a book by a noted television journalist in Northern Ireland, Chris Moore (1996).

In the Republic of Ireland, during the twentieth century, the Catholic Church played a central role in running institutions for children. This suited an impoverished state that long struggled to survive after winning independence from the United Kingdom in 1921. It also suited the Catholic Church, because such institutions were a source of revenue from the state and an outlet for the energies of many nuns and clergy. The Republic had a high proportion of boys and girls institutionalised, relative to Britain. Some of these had committed crimes but most simply came from broken or deprived homes. Approximately 29,500 people, born after 1930, were committed by the courts to industrial and reformatory schools. In addition, 'significant numbers, which cannot be accurately quantified' were committed by parents (Comptroller and Auditor General: 2003: i, 72).

In 1994, mounting concerns about the response of Irish politicians to emerging evidence of child sexual abuse was the most precipitate of a number of factors that led to the collapse of a coalition government in Dublin. This occurred when it transpired that authorities in the Republic had not acted promptly to extradite Fr Brendan Smyth to Northern Ireland, where that priest was wanted by the authorities in respect of serious sexual abuse charges. As it happened, Smyth eventually went to Northern Ireland of his own volition and was jailed. The affair reflected underlying political tensions but also suggested that politicians in the Republic of Ireland were in denial about the extent to which evidence of child sexual abuse was emerging. For some time after this row, child abuse still did not receive the thorough official attention that it would later prove to merit. However, from then on the media sustained an interest in the matter. Thus, for example, in November 1994, RTÉ devoted to it a special edition of *Tuesday File*, which included one of the earliest televised interviews with a victim of clerical sex abuse. Priests and bishops tried not to appear unduly defensive. The Bishop of Clonfert, Dr John Kirby, told the *Irish Times* that he did not think that media coverage of the Brendan Smyth case and its aftermath had been 'over the top'. He did feel, however, that recent editorial statements such as 'all priests are not paedophiles' created a presumption that a significant number of them might be, when in fact it was only a tiny minority who were (Pollack in the *Irish Times* 26/11/94). Greer writes that, in Northern Ireland,

The collective impact of the media exposure of these cases [Kincora and Smyth] was to increase social awareness and to transform sex crime, and child abuse in particular, from an issue of private to public concern. The subsequent impact on levels of press attention to sex crimes was enormous (2003:108).

The impact of this media attention on the subject of child abuse was also felt south of the Irish border.

'Suffer Little Children' on UTV: the Brendan Smyth Programme

On 22 October 1995, a special programme on the Fr Brendan Smyth case was screened by Ulster Television (UTV). The extended edition of *Counterpoint* was entitled 'Suffer Little Children'. It is a rather obvious title for such a programme, and use of this and similarly emotive key phrases by media in the USA has been noted (Jenkins, 1996: 55–56). However, an even more emotive aspect of the UTV production was a shot of Fr Brendan Smyth that has been repeated subsequently in many other TV programmes, on both sides of the Irish border. This showed him lumbering across a street, his stocky body and thickset features appearing to register little sign of shame at his having been found out. His movements had been slowed electronically in order to make the panning shot last longer. The slowing down of Smyth's image bolsters the visual impression that this is not a particularly humble and contrite sinner whom the viewer is observing.

The *Counterpoint* programme received extensive coverage in the media throughout Ireland, not least because it published details of what was known about Smyth's doings in Ireland and the United States, and about the patently inadequate if not devious response of Church authorities to them. The short sequence of images of Smyth that were first seen on *Counterpoint*, and then often repeated elsewhere on Irish television, became a sort of sickening, electronic anti-religious icon. Still images of his face appeared frequently in the print media in general stories about sex abuse. Smyth himself came to be regarded by many Irish people as the personification of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church. Having served a period of imprisonment in Northern Ireland, he was brought south to the Republic, where he pleaded guilty to a total of 74 charges of indecent and sexual assault committed during 35 years and was again jailed. He was soon joined by other clerics in an unholy pantheon of sexual abusers. These included Fr Ivan Payne, Fr Seán Fortune and Fr Paul McGennis. Adults who had been abused as children came forward to recount their experiences. Public anger mounted, but the reaction of the Irish government was still curiously muted.

It became widely recognised that sexual abuse had taken place within both local parishes and institutions run by religious orders. At some such institutions, there was also a level of physical abuse that far surpassed even the harsh beatings that were common in many Irish schools until the last quarter of the twentieth century. Bleak insights into life in Ireland's industrial schools in the mid-twentieth century have been provided by Doyle (1988) and Touher (2001) among others, although the fact the public generally supported tough school discipline, or 'corporal punishment' during that period is noted by Coldrey (1996).

***Dear Daughter* on RTÉ**

Nuns as well as priests were occasionally implicated in allegations of sexual abuse. On 22 February 1996, RTÉ screened *Dear Daughter*, a documentary by Louis Lentin that revealed through interviews what life had been like during the late 1950s and early 1960s for some children at the Goldenbridge Orphanage, Dublin, run by the Sisters of Mercy. The programme did not go entirely unchallenged and a less harsh version of

the institution's history was written by a former Sister of Mercy who had worked at Goldenbridge between 1959 and 1964 (Durkan: 1997). However, one former resident also published a more critical account of that institution (Fahy: 1999).

Because it is a 'drama documentary' that combines both factual reportage and interviews with certain dramatic reconstructions, *Dear Daughter* has been described by one observer as being, '... not, in the strict sense of the word, broadcast journalism' (Horgan, 2004: 209). However, such techniques are quite common in the making of documentaries and the programme subsequently received great attention in the print media and on radio programmes. It further increased the public's level of concern. Then, and again in 2004, the Sisters of Mercy publicly took responsibility for their mistreatment of some children and apologised. In 2004, they also stated publicly that the screening of *Dear Daughter* had had a significant impact on their religious order. One member of the Sisters of Mercy was later reported to have described the effect of *Dear Daughter*, and the subsequent media coverage arising from it, as 'like a tidal wave coming over us'. She 'also divulged that in the weeks coming up to the broadcast of *Dear Daughter* an independent investigation of Goldenbridge was undertaken at the request of the order which found that the allegations contained in the programme were 'credible' (*Irish Independent*, 2/07/04). Although the first to apologise, the order's apology was described as being 'neither fully voluntary nor unconditional' (Raftery and O'Sullivan, 1999: 393). Some innocent priests were now being sworn at or even spat upon as they walked down the street. Not long before, no person would have dared to show such disrespect. When Fr Brendan Smyth died in jail in August 1997, he was buried at night to avoid adverse publicity or disruptive protest.

Gradually, it emerged through media reports that the problem of abusive priests had been known to the bishops for decades and that they had responded to it by either moving priests to other locations or sending them for various kinds of 'treatment', or both. The 'treatment' proved to be manifestly unsuccessful in many cases. The institutional church hushed up abuse not simply to protect itself from criticism but, as some bishops saw it, to shelter the faithful from a source of scandal. The Irish State also responded tardily to the emergence of stories about child sexual abuse. Ministers dragged their feet and appeared to hope that the whole problem might blow over. It did not.

The Boys of St Vincent's and RTÉ

The main Irish public service broadcaster RTÉ was itself slow to react vigorously to a story which had broken first on the airwaves of Northern Ireland. Despite mounting evidence of institutional abuse going back years, and despite suggestions by a number of people that it should do so, RTÉ waited five years before screening *The Boys of St Vincent's*. This award-winning two-part dramatisation was made for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in the early 1990s. It is based on actual abuse at an institution in Newfoundland by members of a religious order with Irish connections (Harris, 1990). While it is somewhat ponderous in its production style, *The Boys of St Vincent's* has an immediate and obvious resonance for Irish Catholics and its tale of justice being sought was well-received when it was finally screened in Ireland. Despite its flaws, it is difficult not to conclude that its late screening in Ireland represented a residue of the former extreme deference towards the Catholic Church.

The programme's 'heroic' theme is unsurprising, given normal conventions of popular film and television drama (Jenkins, 2001: 71).

In fairness to the public service broadcaster RTÉ, which had been slow to screen *The Boys of St Vincent's*, it was a major journalistic production screened by that organisation in 1999 that finally pushed the Irish government into announcing a series of important measures ostensibly intended to investigate fully institutional child abuse and to provide compensation and justice for the victims or 'survivors' of such abuse. That RTÉ production was a series of three one-hour documentaries directed and written by Mary Raftery, collectively entitled *States of Fear*.

States of Fear on RTÉ

Although newspapers and RTÉ radio programmes had for some time been reporting the subject of child abuse, and a number of RTÉ television programmes had dealt with it to a certain extent, *States of Fear* now had a special impact. Produced and directed by Mary Raftery, and transmitted on 27 April and 4 and 11 May 1999, the short series was very widely reported and discussed in the media, its content generating extensive coverage by other journalists. This was front-page news and, as with other influential television programmes mentioned here, not merely a matter of chatter in the TV review section or among opinion columnists. Both broadsheets and tabloids reacted, and the radio airwaves were filled with anxious discussion about the implications of what people had seen on *States of Fear*. There was no longer any possibility of the government continuing to look the other way.

So concerned were senior ministers by the potential political impact of *States of Fear* that, on the 11 May 1999, just as the last programme in the trilogy was about to be transmitted that night, the Irish government made a major announcement. This was reported immediately and prominently by broadcasting media, and in the national newspapers the following morning. In its statement, the government apologised publicly to those who had been abused as children in institutions. This meant, in effect, that the government also accepted partial responsibility for what had happened down the years and effectively accepted at least some legal liability for damage done. The Irish *Taoiseach* (prime minister) Bertie Ahern of political party Fianna Fáil said:

On behalf of the State and of all citizens of the state, the Government wishes to make a sincere and long overdue apology to the victims of childhood abuse for our collective failure to intervene, to detect their pain, to come to their rescue.

The Government then announced measures aimed at providing compensation from public funds and making further investigations. Ms Justice Mary Laffoy of the High Court agreed to chair an official Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, established in 2000.

Media Coverage of Nora Wall

The public were becoming accustomed to a stream of revelations, and a climate existed in which accusations might be too readily believed. This was illustrated by the strange case of Nora Wall. She and Paul 'Pablo' McCabe were convicted in July

1999 on a charge of raping a ten-year old girl at St Michael's Child Care Centre in Cappoquin, Co Waterford. McCabe had a string of criminal convictions, including for assault, indecent assault and malicious damage. At the time of the alleged offence, in the late 1980s, Wall had been a nun. Sentencing Wall and McCabe, the presiding judge said that he found nothing in favour of either of them. Yet, just days later, an appeal court quashed their convictions following disclosure of errors in their trial, including a failure by the State to reveal certain allegations and statements by third parties that undermined the credibility of the prosecution's witnesses (*Irish Times* on 24/07/99 and 28/07/99).

During the trial, media devoted much attention to lurid allegations against the pair. Wall's alleged actions and inactions presented even the more staid newspapers with colourful copy (e.g. in *Irish Times* on 11/06/99). Once their convictions were quashed, the Director of Public Prosecutions accepted 'fully and ungrudgingly' that she and McCabe were entitled to be presumed innocent of all charges against them. He took the unprecedented step of publishing an account of the mistakes in the case. Kevin Myers (1999) and others raised questions about publicity surrounding the trial. Horgan wrote that Wall's trial 'had been extensively – indeed, sensationally – reported in all the media. There can have been few occasions in the past few decades in which the public mind-set, created in large part by those media reports and confirmed by the jury verdict and the trial judge's comments, has been so directly challenged' (*Irish Times*, 26/08/99). Eight missionary sisters pronounced themselves 'appalled by the moral bankruptcy of the country to which we have returned' (*Irish Times* 27/12/99). Breen (2000) noted how Brendan Smyth had been implicitly and gratuitously linked by some media to the Nora Wall case, through the inclusion of his picture as an illustration, or otherwise. The Wall case rapidly slipped off Ireland's media agenda, at least until 2009 (Downes et al.; Commission, ii, 372-3). Clerical child sexual abuse did not.

Stolen Lives on TV3

Privately-owned national television station TV3, which was not renowned for devoting resources or time to serious documentaries, recognised the public appetite for stories about clerical sexual abuse. During 1999 and 2000, that station commissioned a three-part series, collectively entitled *Stolen Lives*. The series helped to keep public attention focussed vividly on the effects of child abuse. Directed by Louis Lentin of Crescendo Concepts, the programmes were entitled 'Our Boy's Stories' (24 October 1999), 'We Were Only Children' (31 October 1999), and 'Philomena's Story' (5 November 2000). However, the last of these was strongly criticised by both the Sisters of Mercy and the Catholic archdiocese of Dublin as unfair and untruthful, most particularly in respect of an allegation of group rape involving nuns and a priest. Shortly before its transmission, TV3 offered the Sisters of Mercy what the latter religious order described as 'a totally inadequate means of right of reply'. Opinion columnist Breda O'Brien agreed

The picture painted of life in St Anne's is so unrelentingly appalling that in simple justice, opportunity should have been afforded the Sisters of Mercy to state their side of the story. TV3 might well counter that two days before the broadcast they offered the Sisters of Mercy and the Diocese of Dublin slots

of 90 seconds each after the programme in which a TV3 announcer would read a statement from them. However, a statement read by a TV3 employee would have little impact against 48 minutes consisting mostly of close-ups of Philomena Byrne's tear-stained face (*Irish Times* 11/11/00).

Criticism of the programme raised questions about the broadcasting of emotional and uncorroborated allegations relating to alleged events long past. The scandal of sex abuse in the Irish Church had been clearly revealed by the Irish media before the *Boston Globe*, in 2001 and 2002, ran its influential, investigative stories about abuse in the Boston archdiocese that led to the resignation of Cardinal Bernard Law (*Boston Globe*; Rezendes). Yet, even after such media coverage, the response of the Catholic Church continued to attract much criticism.

For its part, the Irish government was also struggling to respond in a way that would satisfy the public. In 2002, a deal brokered by a retiring government minister, Michael Woods (during the final days of the 28th Dáil/Irish parliament), allowed religious orders to escape most of the financial liability arising from a growing number of legal actions by survivors of sexual abuse. Under that deal, the terms of which have been severely criticised, the State agreed to use public funds to make up a substantial shortfall when courts award compensation (Comptroller and Auditor General, 2003: i, 72–101). Then, in September 2003, Judge Laffoy resigned as chairperson of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, blaming the government for failing to support her work with adequate powers and resources. The government tried to defend itself. Judge Seán Ryan agreed to succeed her.

Suing the Pope on BBC 2

Ulster Television, RTÉ and TV3 having played their part in the unfolding story, BBC 2 now stepped forward. On 19 March 2002, it transmitted 'Suing the Pope'. Produced by Sarah MacDonald for *Correspondent*, a current affairs series, the programme included moving interviews with victims of abuse in the Irish diocese of Ferns, where Brendan Comiskey had been bishop since 1984. At the centre of that abuse had been Fr Seán Fortune (O'Connor, 2000; Ferns Inquiry, 2005). Ironically, Fortune, like Bishop Brendan Comiskey himself, was associated with a communicative, if not garrulous, element among the clergy of the Catholic Church. Their populist presentational style and embrace of the media was acceptable to Vatican authorities and to the Irish hierarchy at a time when some of those proposing other and deeper reforms within their Church experienced contempt or victimisation.

For its programme, the BBC unearthed an old clip of Fortune participating in a studio discussion on that longest-running popular Irish TV series, *The Late Late Show*, where he spoke ambivalently about homosexuality and morality. While the Irish media has generally distinguished between homosexuality and paedophilia throughout its coverage of the unfolding scandal, Fortune's performance on that occasion rang hollow alongside the stories of his male victims, as the BBC now relayed them. In May 1999, Fortune had committed suicide while awaiting trial. His victims, who felt cheated of justice by his act of self-annihilation, welcomed the BBC programme.

Bishop Comiskey refused to engage in depth with the BBC programme-makers, but was shown stepping from his car while singing the title of a popular feminist

anthem, *I Will Survive* (which he actually warbled as 'We will survive'). He proceeded to decline an interview as he shut the door of the church on the TV reporter. Soon afterwards, with RTÉ preparing to repeat that BBC programme, Comiskey resigned. The government subsequently established an inquiry into abuse in the diocese (Ferns Inquiry, 2005: 1)

Other television programmes widely discussed in the media have included *Sinners*. This was a special drama about life in one of the Magdalen laundries, which were institutions run by nuns and staffed mainly by unmarried mothers. Directed for the BBC by Aisling Walsh, from a script by Elizabeth Mickery, it was first transmitted on 26 March 2002, on BBC One, and then screened by RTÉ One on 23 March 2002, before being repeated on BBC One on 30 April 2003. That same year, Walsh also directed a film for theatrical release, *Song for a Raggy Boy*, about an Irish reformatory school in the 1930s. Magdalen asylums also featured in *The Magdalen Sisters* (2002). Written and directed by Peter Mullan, this won the Golden Lion Award for Best Picture at the Venice Film Festival 2002. However, straight factual current affairs continued to be at least as telling in some respects as the most cleverly produced feature film could be. The nature of the material was simply fascinating for television viewers, as they watched people openly discuss in primetime the horrible details of abuse in a society where sexual references had, for so long in the twentieth century, been either avoided or heavily censored.

'Cardinal Secrets' on RTE

On 17 October 2002, a television programme again sparked widespread news coverage in the other media and immediate reaction from the authorities of church and state. Produced by Mary Raftery and presented by Mick Peelo for *Primetime*, the leading current affairs series on RTÉ One, 'Cardinal Secrets' catalogued failures by Cardinal Desmond Connell and the Dublin archdiocese to control abusing priests. This programme helped to propel the Irish Catholic Church itself into finally setting up its own inquiry into sexual abuse. However, this was abandoned when the State indicated, in late 2002, that it intended to hold an official inquiry into the bishops' handling of child abuse complaints generally, similar to that already planned for the diocese of Ferns. However, not until late 2005, three years later, was that further official inquiry actually initiated and its scope was then limited.

Writing soon after the transmission of 'Cardinal Secrets', Patsy McGarry (2002a), religious affairs correspondent of the *Irish Times*, thought that, 'RTÉ, radio and television, excelled itself in its coverage of the fall-out from the *Prime Time* programme, 'Cardinal Secrets'. As it did with the programme itself'. McGarry, himself a former pirate radio broadcaster, also commented on the important role that television had played in the whole debate. 'It needed TV', he wrote. 'Years of excellent investigative print journalism on paedophile priests in Ferns was unable to achieve the same impact as 50 minutes of victims and their families telling their stories to camera', he said. McGarry paid one of many media tributes to the continuing work of RTÉ's Mary Raftery, saying,

This extraordinary woman has shown what good investigative journalism can achieve. Because of her *States of Fear* programme we have the Laffoy [later Ryan] Commission, now addressing how children were treated in institutions

in Ireland. And it seems likely that, thanks to her and Mick Peelo's work on 'Cardinal Secrets' – and the fall-out therefrom – we will soon have a statutory inquiry into clerical child sex abuse in the Republic. Their programme has helped galvanise public and political will in unprecedented determination to root out this great rot once and for all.

General Irish Media Coverage of Sex Abuse

The print media certainly helped to tell the story of child abuse. Popular daytime national radio shows, especially those of RTÉ's Marian Finucane, Pat Kenny and Joe Duffy, also played a role. Yet it has been the sight and sound of survivors of child abuse on television that has most obviously driven the Church and State into significant admissions and major reactions. The impact of such negative publicity on innocent priests could be considerable. In September 2002, the then president of the National Conference of Priests of Ireland, Father John Littleton, expressed his concern that, 'In the ongoing and justified efforts by some media to report on the child sexual abuse issue all priests are being tarnished and labelled. Sometimes there is little attempt to find balance or context.' (McGarry, 2002b). One priest told a journalist that, 'Sometimes I'm afraid to wear a collar going down the street, but you'd feel like a coward not wearing it.' (*Sunday Tribune*, 27/10/2002).

The hierarchy employed the services of some professional public relations consultants but still appeared unable or unwilling to respond to the media in an open, comprehensive and effective fashion. If all bishops did not actually regard the Irish media as an 'enemy of the church', forcing it to address internal problems in new ways (Cozzens, 2002, p. 92), many were very suspicious when it came to talking to journalists. Priests themselves were highly critical of their bishops' handling of the scandal, and many acknowledged that the media's coverage of child sex abuse had its positive side. But they and others also thought the media coverage of clerical sexual abuse was disproportionate to coverage of sexual abuse in other professions (*Sunday Tribune*, 27 October 2002; Quinn, 2005).

A survey supported by the hierarchy itself, in 2003, found that the 'wider church community' (including laity) generally viewed media coverage of child sexual abuse favourably, although some thought that the media were 'destroying the Catholic Church's reputation in Ireland'. The researchers' finding that 84 per cent of people thought the media coverage 'beneficial' may be compared to a survey four years earlier that found 51% believing that media handling of the church scandals had been fair. This difference suggests that increasing media exposure of and to the problem had effectively served to justify in the public mind that very reporting (Goode et al., 2003: 62, 66; McGarry, 1999). Even one critic who believed that, among media in the developed world, the Irish media were most hostile towards the Catholic Church acknowledged that media had done some good work in exposing the story of child sexual abuse (Twomey, 2003).

Discussion of Television Coverage

Documentaries, by their nature, tend to concentrate on personal experiences and to favour interviewees who tell stories in an engaging fashion, and whose features convey their emotions in a way that may be enhanced by televisual 'close-ups'. Their narrative structure is lent dramatic force when producers can employ imagery of looming

Victorian institutions, candles and crucifixes, as well as sound effects that include children at play or in class, and religious choirs or music. Notable in a number of the Irish programmes, as well as these techniques and features, was the occasional use of black and white instead of colour to render short re-enactments or historical references darker and more threatening. The predominantly case-based approach to the problem of most prominent Irish television programmes was consistent with that of press and television coverage of sexual violence against children in Britain, as analysed by the Glasgow University Media Group (Kitzinger and Skidmore, 1995: 48).

Television stations sometimes try to attract audiences by concentrating on what is most graphic and shocking. Thomas notes that 'the reporting of sex crime by the media and the double-edged relationship the media has with such offending has been well-documented'(2000:16). The involvement of the Catholic Church makes it all the more tempting for producers to transform child abuse, in particular, 'from a social problem into a social spectacle' (Costin et al., 1996: 7). However, media professionals do not always give in to such temptations. Thus, Mary Raftery omitted from her *States of Fear* that frequently repeated image of Fr Brendan Smyth lumbering across a road that was described above. Raftery told me that she deliberately decided to omit the image precisely because she felt that it was misleading. In her opinion, it reinforced a mistaken belief that priests who had committed abuse were 'dirty old men' whereas, in fact, many of them had been young at the time of their first offences. Images of Smyth, and of dismal old buildings that once served as childrens' institutions, may also have lodged in the public consciousness and obscured the fact that the vast majority of abusers are not priests but are relatives and friends of the family. As Kitzinger (1999: 9) noted in another context,

The ubiquitous photograph of Myra Hindley, taken on her arrest in the 1960s [for her part in notorious murders of children in England], has a key place in public consciousness, while images of suspicious strangers and dangerous wasteland proved more potent than images of dangerous uncles or threats from within the family home.

Makers of the Irish documentaries considered above worked closely with groups of Irish survivors who are articulate and informed about the causes of child abuse. There is nothing to suggest that they or other media professionals in Ireland have allowed debate or allegations about 'false memory syndrome', or even the fact of actual false allegations, to distort their coverage of the primary problem, as may have happened elsewhere (see, for example, Kitzinger, 1996). The question of whether or not they have paid sufficient attention to feminist perspectives on abuse, as considered by Atmore (1996) in the case of media coverage of two cases in New Zealand/Aotearoa, lies beyond the scope of this paper.

Raftery's conscious decision to avoid using such a compelling if clichéd sequence is a reminder of the agency of Irish media professionals in the process of reporting child abuse. Like their counterparts elsewhere, they are neither simple mirrors of reality nor funnels for public prejudice and ignorance:

An entirely critical view of the media's role also ignores the awful truth that some problems (for example, the cruelty to and abuse of children in some

children's homes in the UK, and the carelessness of child protection systems in Australia) would have continued unabated if it had not been for detailed media exposure (Goddard, 1996:308).

Bertie Ahern Acknowledges (Some) Media Effects

Indeed, on 5 July 2004, giving evidence to the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (at institutions), Taoiseach Bertie Ahern acknowledged that discussions in the media had helped to shape official reactions to the abuse problem. Since then, both Davidson (2007) and Meyer (2007) have noted the influence of media coverage of child abuse on public opinion and political reaction to abuse outside Ireland, while Breen states in the context of Irish sexual crimes that, 'The power of the media as an influence for public policy cannot be overstated'(2007:20). However, there was a limit to Mr Ahern's generosity towards journalists, for he linked his government's formal apology of 1999 (above) directly to his personal experience of meeting survivors of sexual abuse rather than give credit specifically to the RTÉ *States of Fear* trilogy. Yet it was during the days that *States of Fear* was airing, and amid much media publicity concerning its content, that the Government suddenly said sorry and announced its decision to set up a commission of inquiry into institutions at which children were abused.

Conclusion

Members of Catholic religious orders in Ireland are generally appalled by what has emerged about the abuse of children in their care, even if some orders and bishops have had continuing difficulties coping with the crisis (Kenny, 2008; 2009). Bishops have acknowledged that the media played a positive role in respect of discovering child abuse. One fruit of their own efforts to come to terms with the scandal was a report, which they funded, by an independent team from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (McGee, Garavan et al., 2002, and a related book by Goode, McGee and O'Boyle, 2003). In my opinion, passing references in that book to the role of media in respect of child abuse scandals would have benefited from further reflection and from the involvement of persons with greater knowledge of media issues.

The media have, occasionally, been over-zealous and unfair to members of the Catholic Church and have had to apologise for certain errors. For example, the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, a statutory body, upheld a complaint against an RTÉ Radio 1 *Liveline* programme broadcast on 7 October 2003. This concerned the burial of women who had worked in High Park Convent in Drumcondra, Dublin. The Commission found that, 'significant inaccurate claims made during the programme went unchallenged'. It added that, 'the programme approached an emotive subject from a biased perspective and the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity were not afforded a fair right of reply' (www.bcc.ie; decision no. 31/04). RTÉ accepted that it had made mistakes.

Some allegations aired by the media have referred to people who are dead or are too old to respond to them effectively. The published details of allegations sometimes refer only to an institution, thus tarring all of its members with the same brush regardless of the innocence of at least some of them. As to whether or not the media has treated convicted child abusers reasonably, there do not spring to mind any major Irish media excesses in the coverage of released paedophiles such as those that concerned Wilson and Silverman (2002) in their British study. Breen (2007: 20) has

expressed some concern about the representation of sexual crime in general on RTÉ and in the *Irish Times*.

The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse issued its final report on 20 May 2009, sparking extensive media coverage of its finding that 'sexual abuse was endemic in boys' institutions'. The report remarks upon the general lack of interest shown by Irish newspapers in respect of child abuse in the middle decades of the twentieth century (iv, 229–33 and 453). Despite any imperfections and mistakes, television journalism has played a key role in helping to ensure that people at last know about behaviour that was kept secret for far too long.

AUTHOR

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‘SUING THE POPE’ AND SCANDALISING THE PEOPLE: Irish Attitudes to Sexual Abuse by Clergy Pre- and Post-Screening of a Critical Documentary

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Introduction

THE SEXUAL ABUSE OF children became a significant public issue in Ireland in the 1990s, with frequent media reports about the issue. In the main these focused on the issue of abuse of children by members of the clergy and religious orders. Headline cases included the abuse perpetrated by Fr Brendan Smyth, a priest of a religious order who was convicted of multiple counts of sexual abuse of children and subsequently died in prison, and Fr Seán Fortune, a diocesan priest, who committed suicide before his court trial for abuse. While child sexual abuse by clergy was widely exposed in the early 1990s, a subsequent additional scandal was the failure of the institutional Catholic Church to respond adequately to earlier complaints of abuse, and, in particular, to respond adequately to those who experienced abuse.

As part of its response to the problem, the Irish Catholic bishops commissioned an independent research agency – the Health Services Research Centre (HSRC) at the Department of Psychology, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) – to undertake a programme of research on its behalf. Part of the remit to the research group was to examine the effects on the general public of child sex abuse by clergy. This was done by means of a national telephone survey (N=1,081), full details of which are reported elsewhere (Goode, McGee & O’Boyle, 2003). The survey itself took four months to complete. About half-way through the data collection period in 2002, the main UK public service television channel (BBC2) screened a documentary entitled ‘Suing the Pope’¹ which dealt in detail with complaints made to Church authorities about Sean Fortune and the alleged subsequent mishandling of those complaints. This programme was reported in some detail in the Irish media before its showing, and had a high number of Irish viewers since UK channels are accessible in Ireland. The documentary was also reported extensively in other media after screening and was subsequently re-shown on Irish public service channel RTÉ.

The first TV screening provided a point of differentiation within the survey, with some 600 participants having responded before the screening and 481 afterwards. It

¹ ‘Suing the Pope’, Tuesday 19th March 2002 on BBC2, Producer: Sarah MacDonald, Deputy Editor: Farah Durrani, Editor: Fiona Murch.

also served as a 'natural experiment', defined as a 'naturally occurring instance of observable phenomena that approach or duplicate a scientific experiment' (Mathison, 2005:271). This paper examines the differences that exist between the 'before' and 'after' groups by way of examining the role of such a documentary (and related media coverage) in forming public opinion around the topic of child sexual abuse by clergy.

Theoretical Background

If a society can be compelled or encouraged to hold a particular opinion, then those who hold the power to disseminate such opinions hold real power. In medieval times, such power belonged to the Church and to the social system, effectively the aristocracy. Widespread control of public opinion was exercised by the Church and the legal systems as mechanisms of social control. It is only with the advent of printing that alternative influences to public opinion came into play. Open access to the public became a possibility. The free flow of information allied with critical reasoning became important in political affairs. It is in this open process that public opinion is truly formed.

It is in this role of information provision that the mass media come to the fore with respect to public opinion. But scholarship suggests that the media are not simply neutral or dispassionate observers of the social milieu. The opinions expressed in the mass media about social realities are not necessarily co-extensive with equal public opinion; media opinion can, however, reinforce and direct public opinion. There is a real issue of concern as to whether public opinion is really the product of a public engaged in debate or simply a faithful reflection of an elite viewpoint.

Agenda setting theory states that those issues that receive prominent attention in the media become the problems the reading and listening public regards as the nation's most important issues. Lippmann referred to the 'pictures inside the heads' of individuals which were altered by information and developed the idea that the 'pictures' influenced by the media were not a matter of random chance, but arose directly from media choices (1922:12). McCombs and Shaw's original research on the agenda setting function of the mass media concluded that people 'tend to share the media's composite definition of what is important' (1972:184). Iyengar and Kinder's research reinforced the idea that news content shapes public opinion (1987). Media coverage can not only set the public agenda but can also alter public perceptions of the issues and people involved (Brewer and McCombs, 1996). There is also compelling research evidence of intermedia agenda setting. The news media can also set the agenda for themselves by repeated coverage of events and defining the media industry definition of newsworthiness.

The general hypothesis of this study is that public opinion on child sexual abuse, as measured in a national telephone survey, is differentiated by the occurrence of a natural experiment, i.e., the screening a documentary which dealt directly with a specific and dramatic instance of the topic being examined in the survey. No differentiation is made between viewers and non-viewers. What is being measured is the overall post-screening effect.

The Documentary

Suing the Pope was a BBC documentary screened first in the UK on BBC2 and subsequently in Ireland on RTÉ1. It deals with the harsh realities of child sexual abuse

in one Irish diocese and the alleged mishandling and/or cover-up that followed. In the opening 30 seconds, producer Sarah McDonald makes three statements:

Irish Catholic priest, Father Sean Fortune was a bullying, serial paedophile who preyed on young boys. His boss, Bishop Brendan Comiskey knew children were at risk but failed to protect them. These men have been denied justice.

Later the producer states:

It now looks like a paedophile ring, whether formally or informally, was operating within the seminary and for years exploiting the boys. Father Donal Collins, the school principal and another priest were both later separately convicted of sexually abusing young children.

The documentary continues with a horrific account of Fortune’s abuse of young people, despite it being reported to civil and ecclesial authorities. Colm O’Gorman, one of Fortune’s victims, put it very bluntly:

The only sense that I can make of that is that a bunch of men who had powerful privileged positions were much more interested in protecting their power, their position and their institution than they were in any way in protecting the people that they were due to minister to or the people that they spoke of in terms of love or compassion. There’s no love or compassion there. There’s an absolute disrespect and disregard for people and it makes me sick.

Tom Doyle, an American canon lawyer interviewed in the documentary, stated that the issue of covering up was institutional:

There’s been very aggressive action taken by the institution against victims and their families when they have initiated law suits. Very aggressive action by the attorneys to try to, in a sense beat the people down. Parents and families who’ve made disclosures have been threatened, they’ve been intimidated, they’ve been.... they’ve been... they’ve been put into a very fearful stance to try to coerce them into, into not going public.

Throughout the documentary, the victims’ accounts of their rapes, humiliation and suffering by Fortune’s actions, are utterly compelling. It is a hurt that has been compounded for them by the apparent inactivity and non-response of Church authorities. As O’Gorman puts it:

And you have, frankly, bastards like Brendan Comiskey, hiding in his nice palace in Summerhill, behind his alcoholism and his regret and his, you know, his inability to understand or to do anything about it. It’s not good enough; it’s not good enough. It’s not good enough anymore. People have died. People are dying. People are hurting.

As Patsy McGarry, religious affairs correspondent with the *Irish Times*, put it after the screening:

Printed words cannot compete with impact of victims on camera. Years of excellent investigative print journalism on paedophile priests in Ferns was unable to achieve the same impact as 50 minutes of victims and their families telling their stories to camera (*Irish Times*, 3/04/02, p. 5).

The broadcasting of the documentary, first on British terrestrial television (BBC2) on 19 March 2002 and then two weeks later on Irish television (RTÉ1) on 2 April 2002, was followed by a wave of revulsion and protest. The Irish broadcast was preceded by a special edition of RTÉ's flagship current affairs television programme *Prime Time*, which typically has a viewership in the region of 475,000 adult viewers (of a total adult population of 2.75 million). It ultimately set in train a series of events which led to a State inquiry into sexual abuse in the Irish church and the resignation of the then bishop. The documentary was widely reported on throughout the English-speaking world, in print, on television news and on the wire services.

Methodology

The screening of this documentary, mid-way through the RCSI national telephone survey on child sexual abuse in the Irish church, provides a natural experiment which allows a comparison between those surveyed prior to screening with those surveyed after. There is, of course, no way of knowing whether individual respondents after the screening had actually seen the documentary, but that does not invalidate the natural experiment comparison.

The survey data which are used in this paper were gathered in a national telephone survey conducted by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland between 22 January 2002 and 31 May 2002 (cf Goode, McGee & O'Boyle, 2003). The survey was designed to ascertain the views of the wider Church community on child sexual abuse by clergy and to reflect all levels of faith and commitment to the Catholic Church, from those describing themselves as Catholics, or as 'lapsed' Catholics, to those of other religions or those without a belief or faith. The research protocol was given ethical approval by the Research Ethics Committee of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

For prevalence studies of sexual violence, the telephone survey has evolved as the method of choice internationally over the past decade. It has recently been successfully used in a prevalence study of lifetime experiences of abuse: Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland (SAVI).² In that study of over 3,000 adults, the response rate was 71% (N=3,120).

It was felt that advance media attention to this study might be counterproductive given the topic under consideration. The telephone calls made to the general public were consequently 'cold calls', i.e. the participant had no advance notice to expect a call or to know the topic of the study. In order to ensure that the sample would be representative of the general population, census quota estimates by gender and age (young, middle, older age) were drawn up. Data collection began on 22 January 2002 and was completed by 31 May 2002.

² McGee, H., Garavan, R., de Barra, M., Byrne, J. and Conroy, R. (2002). *The SAVI Report: Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland*, Dublin: The Liffey Press in association with Dublin Rape Crisis Centre

Of the 3,722 randomly-generated unique telephone numbers called, 2,048 were valid. Invalid numbers included disconnected numbers, commercial numbers, faxes and numbers where there was no reply after 10 attempts. The valid numbers were categorised into eligible ($n = 1,415$) and ineligible respondents ($n = 633$). Ineligible respondents were private households where the person contacted was unable to take part in the interview. Reasons for this included language barriers, respondent impairments (e.g. deafness), major life events (e.g. recent bereavement) or temporary absences for the duration of the study. Of the 1,415 eligible respondents, 1,081 completed interviews, 321 refused and there were 13 partially completed interviews. The overall response rate for the study was 76%. This is notably high for a public survey in Ireland. Overall, the high response rate suggests that the results can be considered to represent the views of the general population, within the normal caveats that apply to telephone surveys.

Questionnaire

There were 59 items in the interview schedule. Items 1–10, 12–22, 28–31, 33–39 and item 41 were adapted with permission from a US survey with a similar focus (Rossetti, 1995 and 1997). Rossetti organised these items into several themes based on factor analysis. These themes are: Assessment of/trust in the Church's response, Commitment to Church leadership, Idealisation of priests, Trust in priests, Relationship/ trust in God, Evaluation of the Church, and Tolerance of priest perpetrators.

Items 42 (d), 43 and 44 and item 59 were adapted, with permission, from the Irish Marketing Survey's 1997 *Religious Confidence Survey*. These allowed comparison with previous studies.

Items 1–21 asked about attitudes towards the Catholic Church generally, towards clerical perpetrators of child sexual abuse and towards the management of child sexual abuse by the Catholic Church. All of these items (except item 11) were adapted, with permission, from Rossetti (1995; 1997). Some statements were modified slightly for use with an Irish population (e.g. 'Catholic' was placed before the word 'priest' and 'Church', and 'neighbourhood' was used instead of 'parish') since the questions would also be asked of non-Catholics (the Rossetti study dealt only with Catholic respondents).

Items 22–23, also taken from Rossetti, asked if cases of child sexual abuse by clergy had affected the participant's religious practices. If yes, participants were asked how they had been affected (e.g. time spent praying, attendance at religious services). Items 24–31 sought to ascertain the willingness to allow one's children to participate in Church activities. Items 24–27 asked if the participant had children, if they were of school-going age, the age range and the number of boys and girls. Items 28–31 asked the participant if they would be pleased if their child became an assistant during religious services, if they would permit their child to go to a Catholic summer camp or holiday with a priest and if they would be pleased if their child wanted to be a priest. For participants who did not have children, questions were put hypothetically (i.e. "If you had a child").

In Items 32–35, participants were asked if they believed in 'a God' and if so, what was the nature of their relationship with God. Items 36–37 evaluated respondent estimates of the prevalence of child sexual abuse by clergy. They were asked to estimate

Table 1: Outline of questionnaire items and topics

<i>Item #</i>	<i>Topic</i>
1–21	Attitudes towards/trust in the Catholic Church Attitudes towards/trust in Catholic priests Assessment of/trust in Church's response to child sexual abuse
22–23	Effect of child sexual abuse by clergy on religious practices
24–31	Willingness for children to participate in Church activities/associate with clergy and choose religious life
32–35	Belief in God; Relationship/trust in God
36–37	Estimates of the prevalence of child sexual abuse by clergy
38–39	Quality of clergy (past and present) Quality of Catholic Church (past and present)
40–42	Origin of knowledge about child sexual abuse Origin of knowledge about child sexual abuse by clergy Assessment of media coverage of child sexual abuse Assessment of media coverage of child sexual abuse by clergy
43–44	Effect of child sexual abuse by clergy on how clergy are judged Effect of child sexual abuse by clergy on the Catholic Church Estimation of the number of clergy convicted of sexual offences against children
45–49	Awareness of actions taken by the Catholic Church to address the problem of child sexual abuse by clergy Awareness of Church guidelines on child sexual abuse Opinions on who is responsible for the occurrence and management of child sexual abuse by clergy Suggestions for ways the Catholic Church could help those who have been abused
50–57	General demographic characteristics of participant
58–59	Religious denomination of participant Attendance at religious services by participant

the percentage of clergy involved in the sexual abuse of children and to estimate the percentage of children sexually abused by clergy. They were also asked to compare clergy to other men in society and to estimate whether they abused children more, less or the same as other men.

Items 38–39 asked participants to judge the quality of Catholic clergy and the quality of the Catholic Church today, compared to the past. Items 40–42 focused on the source of the public's knowledge about child sexual abuse in general and child sexual abuse by clergy. Participants were also asked to judge whether media coverage of child sexual abuse by clergy was damaging or beneficial (and for whom) and if it was fair. In items 43–44, participants were asked if they thought that clergy, as a result of child sexual abuse by clergy, had been unfairly judged and if the Church

had been damaged. If they answered yes, they were asked if they thought this damage was permanent. They were also asked to estimate the number of clergy convicted of sex offences against children in Ireland in the last 10 years.

Items 45–49 examined awareness of actions taken by the Church to address the problem of child sexual abuse by clergy, evaluated perceived responsibility for the occurrence and management of child sexual abuse by clergy and sought opinions on what the Church should be doing to help those who have been abused. Items 50–57 determined participant gender, age, occupation and marital status, were obtained. The last survey items, 58 and 59, asked participants about their own religious denomination (if any) and if they had always been a member of this identified religion or if they had changed. The participants were also asked about frequency of attendance at religious services.

Data Analysis

Statistical analyses were conducted on items which dealt with attitudes towards, or trust in, the Catholic church; attitudes towards, or trust in, Catholic priests; and assessment of, or trust in, the Catholic church's response to child sexual abuse (N=22 items). Independent t-tests, with the 99% confidence level set as the level of significance since multiple tests were run. The pre- and post-TV screening variable was used as the independent variable. Results are given in Table 2.

Of these twenty-two attitudinal variables, fourteen showed a statistically significant difference between pre-screening and post-screening participants. The mean increase in disagreement is greatest in terms of overall satisfaction with the Church, satisfaction with priests and trust in the Church to take care of its problems.

Post-screening participants were less likely to be satisfied with the Church and with priests, less likely to trust the Church to take care of its own problems, less likely to look to priests for moral leadership, less likely to believe the Church would safeguard children entrusted to its care, less likely to accept abuser priests to work in their communities under supervision and less likely to see the Church's response as adequate.

They were also more likely to want a ban on abuser priests returning to ministry (except where there is supervision and no child contact). They were also more likely to wonder about the trustworthiness of new priests when they arrive in a parish, more likely to agree with the publication of clerical abuse, more likely to agree that clergy abuse had impacted on their faith lives, more likely to support the ordination of homosexual men, and more likely to wonder about the sexual problems of aspirants to the priesthood.

There was no statistical difference in the level of agreement about celibacy, in the level of agreement about the Church's direct response to abuse, about the level of information provided by the Church, on the Church's guidance on issues of human sexuality, on the expectation that priests' moral conduct be better than that of others, nor on the statement that most Catholic priests who abuse children are homosexual. In all of these, there was a marked level of disagreement/dissatisfaction with the Church amongst all participants. The greatest level of disagreement was with the statement 'I have been kept adequately informed by the Catholic Church about child sexual abuse'. There was no statistical difference in the responses about Catholic priests being closer to God than others and the statement that Catholics should do what priests tell them.

Table 2: Mean differences and standard deviations in public attitudes regarding clerical child sexual abuse from pre- and post-screening of a TV documentary on the issue (statistical comparisons by 2-tailed t-tests) *

	<i>pre -TV screening Mean</i>	<i>pre -TV screening (SD)</i>	<i>Post-TV screening Mean</i>	<i>Post-TV screening (SD)</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>sig.</i>
Incidents of Catholic priests sexually abusing children should not be made public.	1.42	0.83	1.70	0.74	-5.87	p<.001
I have been kept adequately informed by the Catholic Church about child sexual abuse.	1.87	1.07	1.81	0.79	0.96	ns.
I would accept a Catholic priest who had abused children into my neighbourhood to work if he had undergone psychological treatment, was being supervised by another priest and his duties did not involve contact with children.	2.05	1.20	2.28	1.09	-2.78	p<0.01
The Catholic Church's current response to the sexual abuse of children by priests is adequate.	2.10	1.07	1.93	0.91	2.75	p<.01
I support the requirement that Catholic priests live a celibate life.	2.13	1.31	2.03	1.02	1.35	ns.
Catholics should do what a Catholic priest tells them to do.	2.16	1.05	2.27	0.84	-1.89	ns.
The Catholic Church is dealing with the problem of sexual abuse directly.	2.21	1.08	2.14	0.94	1.17	ns.
Catholic priests are closer to God than other people.	2.28	1.20	2.35	0.91	-1.12	ns.
When someone wants to be a Catholic priest today I wonder if he has sexual problems.	2.29	1.03	2.71	0.96	-6.69	p<.001
I would accept a Catholic priest who had abused children into my neighbourhood to work if he had undergone psychological treatment and was being supervised by another Catholic priest.	2.38	1.37	2.17	1.07	2.75	p<.01
Cases of Catholic priests sexually abusing children have negatively affected my religious practices (pray less, go to Church less, etc.)	2.42	1.44	2.72	1.23	-3.70	p<.001
I believe that most Catholic priests						

who sexually abuse children are homosexuals.	2.52	1.04	2.65	0.93	-2.13	p<.05
I look to the Catholic Church to provide guidance on issues of human sexuality.	2.63	1.27	2.58	1.09	0.65	ns.
When a new Catholic priest arrives in my neighbourhood, I wonder if he is someone we can trust.	2.83	1.24	3.06	1.02	-3.32	p<.001
Homosexually-oriented men should be allowed to be ordained as Catholic priests.	2.83	1.17	3.15	1.04	-4.59	p<.001
I trust the Catholic Church to take care of problems with its own clergy.	2.96	1.29	2.57	1.07	5.44	p<.001
I believe the Catholic Church will safeguard the children entrusted to its care.	3.06	1.16	2.81	1.04	3.62	p<.001
Overall, I am satisfied with the Catholic Church today.	3.21	1.31	2.73	1.10	6.39	p<.001
Overall, I am satisfied with the priests in the Catholic Church today.	3.45	1.20	3.05	1.12	5.46	p<.001
I look to Catholic priests to provide moral leadership.	3.60	1.19	3.32	1.07	4.04	p<.001
I expect a Catholic priest's moral conduct to be better than other peoples conduct.	4.03	0.99	3.90	0.78	2.37	p<.05
A Catholic priest who abused children should not be allowed to return to Ministry (by that we mean active work in a parish).	4.49	1.03	4.70	0.67	-4.00	p<.001

*For each statement, 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree

Attitudinal differences cannot be accounted for on the basis of gender, age cohort or geographic location (urban/rural-dwelling participants) with two exceptions. Using chi-square and Cramer's V measures to control for gender, geographic location and age, the statements that 'the Catholic Church's current response to the sexual abuse of children by priests is adequate' and 'a Catholic priest who abused children should not be allowed to return to Ministry (by that we mean active work in a parish)' were no differences between pre-and post-TV screening responses in urban participants (78.8% and 86.7% respectively disagreed with the first statement) whereas the statistically significant differences indicated above applied to rural dwellers (69.7% and 78.3% respectively disagreed). Similarly, for the statement 'a Catholic priest who abused children should not be allowed to return to Ministry (by that we mean active work in a parish)', the percentage strongly disagreeing/disagreeing rose from 86.3% to 95.8% for rural and from 93.3% to 95.6% post-screening for urban dwellers.

Table 3: Mean differences in public attitudes to children's involvement with the Catholic Church from pre- and post-screening of a TV documentary on the issue (statistical comparisons by 2-tailed t-tests) *

	<i>Pre-Screening Mean</i>	<i>Pre-Screening (SD)</i>	<i>Post-Screening Mean</i>	<i>Post-Screening (SD)</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>sig.</i>
[If I had a child] I would be pleased if my child became an altar server.	3.98	1.26	3.30	1.10	9.03	p<.001
[If I had a child] I would send my child to a Catholic summer camp.	3.43	1.24	2.98	1.03	6.34	p<.001
[If I had a child] I would allow my child to go on holidays with a Catholic priest.	2.59	1.29	2.40	1.00	2.69	p<.01
[If I had a son] I would be pleased if he wanted to be a priest.	3.62	1.21	3.16	1.10	6.23	p<.001

*For each statement, 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree

Four questions focused on attitudes to the possible involvement of participants' sons (from being altar boys to priesthood), with the Church. Pre- and post-TV screening results are given in Table 3. Data indicate a statistically significant decline in the level of agreement with each of the statements following the TV programme. The decline is greatest in the matter of children becoming altar servers. The documentary had focused specifically on the story of one altar boy who was serially abused by a priest. Examination of age, gender and geographic location as differentiating variables indicated no significant differences between the pre- and post-TV programme views.

A further three questions centred on personal faith (Table 4). For each statement, there was less public agreement after the TV screening. Examination of age, gender and geographic location as differentiating variables indicated no significant differences between the pre- and post-TV programme views.

Participants were also asked their beliefs about percentages of clergy and religious engaged in child sexual abuse (absolute estimates), and the percentage of all child sexual abuse carried out by clergy or religious (relative estimates). There was no statistical difference in the answers or estimates pre- and post- TV screening. In other Irish research, the Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland report (McGee et al., 2002) indicated that clergy were responsible for the sexual abuse of 3.2% of those adults reporting abuse as children. After the screening, the percentage of respondents who

Table 4: Multiple variable t-tests of mean differences based on pre and post ‘Suing the Pope’ (t value, degrees of freedom, 2-tail significance and mean difference, pre & post mean values).

	Pre- Screening Mean	Pre- Screening (SD)	Post- Screening Mean	Post- Screening (SD)	t	sig.
I sense that my God is close to me in my daily life.	4.43	0.77	4.04	0.75	7.96	p<.001
I know in my heart that my God loves me.	4.45	0.70	4.10	0.65	8.13	p<.001
I am confident that my God will hear my prayers and respond.	4.40	0.74	4.07	0.69	7.25	p<.001

estimated that most priests and religious sexually abuse children rose from 2.8% to 6.8% (p<.001).

In respect of the question ‘Compared to other men in our society, would you say that Catholic priests and brothers have sexually abused children more, less or about the same’ there was a marked difference between the pre- and post- screening responses (Table 5). There were statistical differences in proportions of participants who thought that clergy or religious were ‘more likely’ or ‘much more likely’ to engage in child sexual abuse compared to other men (30.3 vs. 41.8%; Cramer’s V=.11, p<.001). Using age as a differentiating variable, there were no statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-TV programme screening. The use of gender and urban/rural dwelling as differentiating variables was significant. In relation to gender, there were no pre-/post- screening differences for women but there were for men. Before the TV programme, 29.1% of women estimated that clergy or religious were ‘more likely’ or ‘much more likely’ to engage in child sexual abuse compared to other men (vs. 46.4 % post-screen, p<.001). The corresponding figures for men were 32.5% and 38.6% (ns). Thus more women believed in the increased likelihood of clergy as abusers of children after the documentary. In relation to geographic location there was a similar response. The pre- and post- ‘more likely’ or ‘much more likely’ figures were 25.6% and 44.7%% (p<.001) for urban dwellers compared to 34.1% and 36.1% for rural dwellers (ns).

Participants were also asked their opinions about the fairness about how priests were judged, the perception of damage to the Church, and whether such damage was permanent (tables 6 through 8). Only in the case of the question regarding the fairness with which priests have been judged is there a statistically significant difference before and after screening. The mean difference is marginal 0.17 but the t-test outcome is significant (t=2.68, p<.01).

The screening of *Suing the Pope* also increased public awareness of the steps taken by Church authorities to tackle the issue of child sexual abuse but only marginally

Table 5: Estimates of the Likelihood of Clergy Sexually Abusing Children Relative to Other Men Pre/Post-TV Screening of Documentary on Clerical Child Sexual Abuse

Compared to other men in our society, would you say that Catholic priests and brothers have sexually abused children more, less or about the same?

	<i>Pre-Screening</i>		<i>Post-Screening</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Much More	29	5.3	23	5.2	52	5.3
More	136	25.0	161	36.6	297	30.2
Equally	263	48.3	198	45.0	461	46.8
Less	97	17.8	58	13.2	155	15.7
Much Less	20	3.7			20	2.0
Total	545	100.0	440	100.0	985	100.0

Table 6: Crosstabulation of Statement Regarding 'Judgment About Clergy' by Pre/Post Screening

The majority of priests and religious in Ireland have been unfairly judged as a result of child sexual abuse by priests and religious?

	<i>Pre-Screening</i>		<i>Post-Screening</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Strongly Disagree	23	3.8	8	1.7	31	2.9
Disagree	88	14.7	84	17.5	172	15.9
Don't Know	49	8.2	46	9.6	95	8.8
Agree	280	46.7	293	60.9	573	53.0
Strongly Agree	160	26.7	50	10.4	210	19.4
Total	600	100.0	481	100.0	1081	100.0

so. Prior to the screening, only 28.8% of respondents stated that they were aware of steps taken to address the issue. After the screening that figure rose to 37.4%. Likewise, before the screening only 6.2% of respondents stated that they were aware of the bishops' policy document. Post screening that rose to 13.9%.

The screening also marked a watershed in terms of public understanding of who was responsible for abuse, both in terms of occurrence and management. These data are given in crosstabulated form in Tables 9 and 10. In Table 9 there are two marked differences in the pre- and post-screening data. Prior to the screening, 11.7% of respondents see the hierarchy as responsible for the occurrence of abuse while 76.2% see the abuser as responsible. Post-screening these figures change up to 21.8% for the hierarchy and down to 60.5% for the abuser.

Table 7: Crosstabulation of Statement Regarding ‘Damage to Church’ by Pre/Post Screening

The Catholic Church in Ireland has been damaged by cases of priests and religious sexually abusing children?

	<i>Pre-Screening</i>		<i>Post-Screening</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Strongly Disagree	13	2.2	3	.6	16	1.
Disagree	23	3.8	17	3.5	40	3.7
Don't Know	8	1.3	4	.8	12	1.1
Agree	215	35.8	248	51.7	463	42.9
Strongly Agree	341	43.3	208	56.8	549	50.8
Total	600	100.0	480	100.0	1080	100.0

Table 8: Crosstabulation of Statement Regarding ‘Permanence of Damage’ by Pre/Post Screening

Do you think that this damage is permanent?

	<i>Pre-Screening</i>		<i>Post-Screening</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
No	232	43.4	170	39.9	402	41.9
Yes	302	56.6	256	60.1	558	58.1
Total	534	100.0	426	100.0	960	100.0

Table 9: Crosstabulation of Statement Regarding ‘Responsibility for Abuse Occurrence’ by Pre/Post Screening

First, who do you see as responsible for the occurrence of abuse [why it happens]?

	<i>Pre-Screening</i>		<i>Post-Screening</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Church hierarchy	70	11.7	105	21.8	175	16.2
Other	37	6.2	60	12.5	97	9.0
Priests and religious in general	15	2.5	10	2.1	25	2.3
The actual abuser	457	76.2	291	60.5	748	69.2
The entire Church community	21	3.5	14	2.9	35	3.2
Total	600	100.0	481	100.0	1081	100.0

Table 10: Crosstabulation of Statement Regarding 'Responsibility for Abuse Management' by Pre/Post Screening

Secondly, Who do you see as responsible for the management of child sexual abuse by priests and religious

	Pre-Screening		Post-Screening		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Much More	29	5.3	23	5.2	52	5.3
			1	.2	1	.1
Church hierarchy	251	41.8	174	36.2	425	39.3
Other	187	31.2	254	52.8	441	40.8
The actual abuser	55	9.2	7	1.5	62	5.7
The entire Church community	107	17.8	45	9.4	152	14.1
Total	600	100.0	481	100.0	1081	100.0

A somewhat similar and important change takes place in relation to public perceptions of the responsibility for abuse management. Prior to the screening, 41.8% of respondents see it as the hierarchy's role. This falls to 36.2% after the screening while the perception that it is the responsibility of 'Other' rises from 31.2% to 52.8%. It is probably no great leap to suggest that this represents a view that statutory authorities such as the Gardai (police) and Health Authorities should be the primary persons responsible for abuse management. Such a theoretical position is readily underpinned by the content of the documentary which painstakingly details the abject failure of then Bishop of Ferns in responding to large numbers of complaints about a specific priest in his diocese who abused many boys with whom he had come into contact. Shortly after the screening of the documentary, the bishop offered his resignation and stood down from the diocese.

Discussion

The above data provide compelling evidence of major differences in participants' attitudes to various statements about the issue of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church between the time of the launch of the survey and its completion. The watershed event was the screening of the BBC documentary *Suing the Pope*. It is clear that the screening is a point at which attitudes changed significantly, becoming generally more negative towards the Catholic Church, priests and religious faith. It is important to note that there are no indications whatsoever as to the permanence or otherwise of the public opinion shift on this issue. It may be that it is a temporary shift and that the pre-screening values reflect the enduring and persistent attitudes of the public but there is nothing in the data to substantiate this point of view.

What can be said, and with strongly supporting evidence, is that the screening of a documentary on a particular topic, particularly a topic as repulsive as child sexual abuse by clergy, along with the concomitant public discussions that followed, has a

significant impact on a wide range of variables, both those related directly to the topic of the documentary and those tangential to it.

Of no small significance is the shift in public attitudes about responsibility for the occurrence and management of child sexual abuse. Based on the empirical evidence provided in these data, it is abundantly clear that the public airing of the mishandling of abuse complaints, albeit in only one context, was sufficient to marshal public opinion on the issue such that the public recognises clearly that no organisation can be a law unto itself, and that in the matter of child sexual abuse there is no place for self-regulation.

The core finding of this paper is that media coverage of child sexual abuse has a very significant part to play in terms of effects on public opinion and attitudes. The degree of effect has yet to be determined but the immediate effect of a change in public opinion, in this case at least, has already been sufficient to bring about a statutory investigation by the authorities. While much remains to be done in the tackling and minimisation of child sexual abuse, there is clear evidence that information and analysis provided by media outlets has a critical role to play. Further research is warranted in terms of the extent to which public opinions and attitudes have become formed and hardened. This paper, however, provides us with sufficient understanding of temporary change in response to immediate coverage.

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RUN OUT OF THE GALLERY: The Changing Nature of Irish Political Journalism

Kevin Rafter

Introduction

THIS ARTICLE EXAMINES THE evolution of parliamentary and political reporting in Ireland and builds on earlier work by Foley (1993) and Horgan (2001). It considers the changing nature of Irish political journalism and the loss of influence of the Parliamentary Press Gallery and its constituent part, the Political Correspondents Group. This analysis takes place against a backdrop of continuing very high interest in politics in Ireland. During the 2007 general election, the television debate between Bertie Ahern and Enda Kenny, the leaders of the two main political parties, had an average audience of 941,000 – a national audience share of 63.3 per cent and a reach during the programme of 1.4m viewers. The debate between the leaders of the other political parties – broadcast the previous evening to the main debate – had a national share of 38.3 per cent or 581,000 viewers. In addition, the RTÉ website, which had a dedicated area for election material, received just over 1.5m hits on the day of the main leaders' debate. Party political broadcasts, regardless of their impact, were also watched by sizable audiences – the 16 broadcasts had an average viewership of 500,000 people. Opinion poll research undertaken in 2009 showed that six in ten of all adults could recall party political broadcasts from the previous general election (Rafter, 2009). These are all significant figures.

While the leaders' debate is a unique political event linked to a general election with heightened public attention, there is ongoing evidence from continuing high viewership figures for current affairs programmes in non-election periods to suggest that the Irish public continues to turn to the mainstream media for information on politics. However, the journalistic practices which generated this political news for viewers, listeners and readers have changed significantly. After several decades of little development in the structure of the Irish media market – and also in the nature of reporting – more media outlets and increased competition have over the last 20 years introduced considerable diversity into Irish political journalism with different priorities in different organisations. For example, research has shown that the three main daily tabloids – the *Irish Sun*, the *Irish Daily Star* and the *Evening Herald* – devoted few front page headlines to the 2007 election campaign and for no more than half of the campaign these newspapers made no mention at all of the election on their front pages. The broadsheets – the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Independent*, and to a lesser extent the *Irish Examiner* mentioned the campaign on their front page on most days during the campaign. (Brandenburg and Zalinski, 2007:177) The discussion below seeks to analyse the changing nature of Irish parliamentary and political

There were numerous complaints from opposition politicians about fair access to the airwaves. The benign relationship was illustrated in a Dáil (lower house) debate in the 1950s about the creation of a new Irish national television station, when one Member of Parliament expressed the fear that the service would become a 'play thing of party politics' (Savage, 1996: 199).

There were no political discussion programmes on Irish radio in the initial decades after independence. Indeed, the first unscripted political discussion programme was not broadcast until 1951. A weekly commentary on parliamentary proceedings was also introduced that year. Party political broadcasts were transmitted for the first time during the 1954 general election. From the mid-1950s, new ground started to be broken in relation to political reportage. Yet the coverage of parliament and the political process in print and broadcast was primarily passive and was reactive to events and announcements compared to what is available today. It was in this environment that the Parliamentary Press Gallery emerged on an ad hoc basis in Ireland. While Seán Lemass, for example, held regular briefings with senior journalists on the supply of goods during World War II, this appears to have been an exception rather than a rule. Horgan observed that 'the likelihood is that the lobby began to exist on a formal or semi-formal basis at some stage in the early 1950s, and retained its basic shape unchanged for about two decades' (Horgan, 2001: 262). The number of members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery was initially small at around a dozen while turnover was low. Reporters were the conduits to the public of parliamentary proceedings, political scoops were few, personality politics was non-existent and opinion polls were not available to fill pages or broadcast news programmes.

The nature of reportage underwent its first significant development with the arrival of an Irish television service in 1961. The nascent domestic television channel gave politicians an increasing sense of importance but there were many uneasy moments between the government and the new television service as politicians were held to account by the media in a way not experienced previously. During this period there was evidence that ministers started to develop distinct relationships with political journalists. This was best illustrated by the friendship which developed between reporter John Healy and Donagh O'Malley, one of the new generation of Fianna Fáil politicians who secured ministerial rank in the 1960s. O'Malley, who died of a heart attack in 1968, was alongside Charles Haughey and Brian Lenihan in being part of the first generation of media-aware Irish politicians. Twenty years after O'Malley's death, Healy wrote a major reassessment as a journalist, a friend and a contemporary in which he recalled the story of when O'Malley's car was stopped by the Gardai in March 1962 (Healy, 1988). 'This is believed to be the incident which gave birth to the story of O'Malley being stopped and asked if he hadn't seen the arrow direction sign to which he was said to have replied "What arrow? – I didn't even see the bloody Indians".' Healy didn't confirm or deny the veracity of the story but wrote of meeting O'Malley after he had published details of a court case where he was fined and had his driving licence suspended for 12 months.

A week or so later I was in Áras an Uachtaráin [official residence of the President of Ireland] and the shadow of a tall man came up behind me, tapped me on the shoulder and I spun around to come face to face with Donagh

O'Malley. 'Is your name Healy?' 'That's right.' 'Are you the fucker that crucified me in the *Mail*?' 'That's basically right, yes.' 'Will you have dinner with me tomorrow night?'

Healy accepted, and it can only be assumed that others issued with similar invitations also accepted. It is hard to imagine such close relations between a journalist and a politician in an earlier generation. Politicians increasingly brought a new sophistication to their dealings with the media. During the 1970s the position of Government Press Secretary was created to manage the relationship with political journalists. The interactions were initially informal but as news management professionalised – and the number of reporters covering politics increased – the relationship became more formalised with regular non-attributable briefings for political correspondents. A new group of journalists started to report on politics including Geraldine Kennedy, Olivia O'Leary and Vincent Browne. They thrived in the hostile environment generated by the intense rivalry between Garret FitzGerald and Charles Haughey – respectively leaders of the two main political parties, Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil – and on the deep divisions within Fianna Fáil over Haughey's continued leadership of the party. Leaks and counter leaks from senior political figures fed media exclusives. The longtime passive style of reporting had formally ended. By the end of the 1980s, after many years of relative stability, the Irish media market commenced a period of considerable structural change. Privately-owned commercial broadcasters – at national level, television station, TV3 and radio stations, Today FM and Newstalk – were licensed and began to challenge RTE's dominance of the broadcasting market. Over the same period, several UK newspapers including the *Sunday Times* and the Mirror Group introduced Irish editions. The arrival of these media outlets contributed to an increase in the number of journalists accredited to the Parliamentary Press Gallery while the traditional media outlets – RTE and the national newspapers – also strengthened their reporting teams in Leinster House. From around a dozen reporters in the late 1960s, membership of the Parliamentary Press Gallery was just short of 100 journalists in 2000. The numbers reached 130 by 2009.² By way of comparison, about 170 journalists are said to work each day at Westminster although information released in 2007 by the British government put the number of parliamentary correspondents, including those issued with temporary passes, at 250.³

The media has no automatic right to a place in the Irish parliamentary complex, and many journalists would admit that they are tolerated on sufferance by some politicians and officials alike. The lobby list at Westminster is kept by the Speaker of the House – in Leinster House the chairman of the Press Gallery supplies the Superintendent of the House with a similar list of names. The Parliamentary Press Gallery has autonomy over its own affairs within Leinster House. It is granted office space, desks, telephones and car spaces which the gallery committee then assigns to its members. Membership is now divided into two categories: there are 81 full members and 49 associate members. However, the distinction between the two groups

² Information supplied by Eoin Ó Murchú, chairperson of the Parliamentary Press Gallery

³ House of Commons, 28 March 2007, www.theyworkforyou.com (26 February 2009) and Westminster Press Gallery History, www.thepressgallery.org.uk (15 February 2009)

exists more in theory than in reality, and is best evident by the colour of their respective Leinster House identity/swipe cards. All accredited reporters receive an identity/swipe card which gives them special access to the Leinster House complex and the right to cover parliamentary debates and committee meetings. Full members have a red identity/swipe card which allows them automatic access to the gallery overlooking the Dáil chamber whereas the pink coloured identity/swipe card issued to associate members grants the holder access to the Leinster House complex but not the chamber gallery. Associate members need assistance from a full member of the Parliamentary Press Gallery or a Leinster House official to gain entry. Associate members tend to be specialist correspondents in areas such as health, education and the environment. They do not have office accommodation in the Leinster House complex and generally only attend committee meetings or ministerial question time when the proceedings have a relevance to their specialist area.

The main distinction between members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery is not, however, between full and associated members but rather between those members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery who are members of the Political Correspondents Group and those who are not. All members of the Political Correspondents Group have full membership of the Parliamentary Press Gallery but the reverse is not true. The Political Correspondents Group has no written rules – the group takes what can best be described as ‘internal soundings’ on issues of mutual interest but to progress any matter the involvement of the Parliamentary Press Gallery is required. This distinct but informal grouping best corresponds to the Westminster lobby and has frequently been described as such although strictly speaking the application of the term ‘lobby’ to Irish political journalism is incorrect as no such group actually exists. While, as mentioned above, the Irish system did not fully replicate the Westminster lobby, a certain amount of exclusivity developed around the small group of reporters who covered events in Leinster House. The sense of exclusivity was initially best illustrated by the press gallery itself which overlooks the Dáil parliament chamber. Each seat on the gallery is identified by a brass plate providing the name of newspapers including the *Irish Times*, the Irish Press Group, Independent Newspapers as well as RTÉ. The plates were fitted in the era of few reporters covering politics and of far fewer media organisations in general. It is little wonder that Foley referred to a parliamentary group of reporters that was ‘clubby and exclusive’ (Foley, 1993:21).

Writing about the Parliamentary Press Gallery, Foley observed that it was ‘these few journalists, working together, who write the first story on any event, who decide what to cover and how stories should be covered’ (Foley, 1993: 21). The main disadvantage of this arrangement is that it leads to the creation of a club-type atmosphere and creates the conditions which allow ‘pack journalism’ to prevail. The term was defined during the 1972 American presidential election campaign when Timothy Crouse saw reporters moving in packs, dining together, sipping liquor, socialising, sharing and comparing notes with other colleagues over extended time periods (See Matusitz and Breen, 2007). The danger of pack journalism is that reporters jointly covering an institution or a campaign feed off one another and reinforce their joint focus. Many of these traits are evident in the context of the Parliamentary Press Gallery where reporters spend their working day in Leinster House removed from their newsdesks and working with colleagues from rival media

organisations. Collective self-censorship can also prevail. In 2008, due to refurbishment work in Leinster House, the political correspondents rooms on the top floor of the building were closed. The occupants were relocated to external offices several hundred metres outside the parliamentary complex although a 'hot desk' arrangement was introduced to facilitate those working in the House. Nobody – this writer included – wrote about the horrendous waste of public money involved in equipping the new offices with an excessive multitude of large flat screen television monitors. It was a glaring example of public sector waste – in several small offices there was a monitor per reporter – but nobody wrote the story up. As mentioned, the political correspondents have until recently had their own rooms in Leinster House – on the top floor of what is a relatively small building. Other parliamentary reporters have offices at the rear of the parliament chamber. There is little luxury. The rooms are small, cramped and overcrowded. While there is a members bar and a members restaurant for politicians, most of those who work in the complex congregate around the main public restaurant and public bar in the original Leinster House and a coffee dock area in the newer Leinster House building. All occupants are in close proximity but unlike the Healy-O'Malley relationship described previously, those in closest contact today tend to be journalists, political advisors and backbench TDs. Ministers with full work agendas which take them in a variety of different locations are less accessible than previously and are buffeted by advisors.

The Briefing System

The political correspondents in Leinster House attend a daily private briefing given by the Government Press Secretary. With coalition administrations increasingly formed as a norm in the Irish Republic, the briefings are given by government press officers from the different political parties in office. In the 1997 to 2002 period, the daily briefing was attended by the Government Press Secretary who was seen as representing Fianna Fáil, the largest party in the coalition, while the Progressive Democrats were represented by their appointee as Assistant Government Press Secretary. After the 2007 general election, with the Green Party joining Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats in a new three party coalition arrangement, the daily briefings were attended by representatives of each party.

The daily briefings are not recorded. They are held in private at varying times generally between five and seven o'clock. The content is usually off-the-record with attribution to 'government sources' although occasionally the material with permission may be credited to 'a spokesperson for the government'. But the spokespeople are rarely named. In terms of journalism practice, few exclusives emerge from these secretive briefings. A reporter with a scoop will never take the story into the briefing to tip off competitors about what they would otherwise read with journalistic envy the following morning. The truth is that journalists do their business in private with their own sources. Politicians and their advisors also naturally brief journalists individually – and that is where the real business is done. The briefings – in this writer's experience – tend largely to be information flow events where the press officers make a series of announcements to a captive audience, such as the cabinet has approved certain appointments, made certain appointments and authorised certain policy actions. There is an opportunity for questions and to tease out issues related to running controversies but, in general, the government

spokesperson rarely departs from a prepared template of answers obviously agreed in advance. The briefings are to the advantage of print journalists who can reproduce everything said by the spokepeople while without sound or pictures broadcast reporters are left to paraphrase the material for their audiences. The absence of cameras plays to the advantage of the spokesperson as one writer explained in the Westminster context: 'Spin-doctors are learning that by their body, by the way they emphasise or downplay words and phrases, they can influence how the newspapers report something. You cannot do that when cameras lenses and microphones are fixed on you' (Ross, 1999). The exclusion of specialist correspondents plays to the advantage of the government when their area of expertise is the main political subject of the day. The Irish system is far less formalised than its equivalent at Westminster where members are issued with a booklet, *Notes on the Practice of Lobby Journalism*, which for many years advised that 'the cardinal rule of the Lobby is never to identify its informant without specific permission.'

The system at Westminster has undergone considerable change in recent times. In the mid-1980s the Westminster lobby system was embroiled in controversy amid accusations that government spokesman Bernard Ingham was using the private briefings to damage ministers as part of internal warfare within Margaret Thatcher's Conservative administration. The lobby was faced with the refusal of the newly established *Independent* to join and the subsequent withdrawal of the *Guardian* and the *Scotsman*. By the early 1990s all three newspapers had returned to the daily briefing system when the new John Major government agreed to allow previously unattributable lobby briefings to be credited to 'Downing Street sources'. There has been further change since the 1997 election of the New Labour government. For a variety of reasons Alastair Campbell was a very different official spokesman. For one, he attended cabinet meetings. This gave him first hand access to the material about which he was briefing lobby members. Significantly Campbell ended the 70-year-old Westminster system of secret unattributable briefings for a selective group of journalists. He also broke up the closed shop that was lobby reporting. Under the new regime the briefings were on-the-record and non-Westminster journalists and foreign correspondents were invited to attend. The New Labour government also introduced monthly televised prime ministerial media conferences. None of these changes at Westminster has, as yet, been incorporated into the arrangements at Leinster House. There are strong arguments in terms of transparency and accountability for considering the new Westminster system. However, in reality recent developments have served to significantly lessen the central importance of the Parliamentary Press Gallery and its constituent Political Correspondents Group in Irish political journalism.

Bertie Ahern and New Media Strategies

Media coverage of parliament – what is said in the Dáil and Seanad (upper house) chambers – has been in decline for some time. Over two decades ago, the distinguished academic and then Fine Gael member of the Oireachtas, Maurice Manning argued that, 'The decline in the quantity of Oireachtas coverage is now a fact of life and the trend towards even less coverage is likely to continue' (Manning, 1988). The trend did continue. With its 'newspaper of record' ethos, the *Irish Times* is the only national newspaper that still allocates fixed editorial space to the

proceedings in parliament. The reduction in parliamentary coverage has been driven by a multitude of facts – some are economic and relate to the cost of maintaining a large staff in Leinster House and others are news-related and focus on the long periods when the routine business of parliament means there is little hard news. In his history of British journalism, Andrew Marr was brutally honest in offering an explanation for the decline of parliamentary reporting at Westminster: ‘the quality of what is said in the Commons is mostly so banal that the average Briton, with today’s choice of enticing media, shopping opportunities and so on, would rather have a nail driven slowly through the forebrain than be forced to read or watch it’ (Marr, 2004: 139). Having spent almost 13 years in the environs of Leinster House as a political journalist with a number of media organisations, this writer can testify that there are few great speakers in contemporary Irish politics, not to mind great speeches. Moreover, what it said rarely carries consequence as the chamber is not a place where meaningful discussion happens; if anything considerable indifference hangs over the chamber. News rarely happens in the chamber and the explanation is obvious because if politics is about power – and political stories are about power – then parliament is increasingly irrelevant as far less power resides in parliament.

The twin factors of Ireland’s adoption of a social partnership model and Bertie Ahern’s 11-year tenure as taoiseach added significantly to situation. The development of a social partnership model in the post-1987 period integrated employers, trade unions and other civic society and vested interest groups into a decision-making arrangement with the government of the day. Between the cabinet room and the conference hall, where the social partners reside, national policy decisions are now discussed and agreed. The role of parliament has been to rubber stamp a done deal. Media organisations, therefore, tend to pay more attention to the words of business and union leaders than those uttered in the Dáil chamber by senior political figures. Ahern, who was elected taoiseach for the first time after the 1997 general election, was one of the champions of this form of public policy decision-making. Moreover, Ahern displayed little interest in the proceedings of parliament and spent as little time as possible in the chamber. A political arrangement with the Labour Party relating to parliamentary privileges allowed Ahern to effectively skip attending the Dáil every Thursday. So with the Dáil generally sitting three days a week, Ahern was essentially involved in parliamentary life for a limited number of hours during two days each sitting week.

Alongside the social partnership process, Ahern moved his engagement with political journalists beyond the traditional confines of the Parliamentary Press Gallery. In the 1994 to 1997 period, when he led Fianna Fáil in opposition, the Ahern media strategy targeted local news organisations and the tabloid press. This policy continued after Ahern was elected taoiseach as Fianna Fáil sought unmediated access to voters. Daly has written about the strong relationship which developed between Fianna Fáil and the *Nems of the World*. The Irish edition of the Sunday tabloid published 120 political editorials between March 1997 and December 2000 of which 88 (73 per cent) were written by Fianna Fáil politicians (see Daly, 2002). Ahern was also selective in making himself available for media interviews. Time was provided to newspapers for end-of-year interviews but there was little availability outside this controlled downtime for news stories which guaranteed lead-story treatment and prominent inside page space. There was also a strong preference for light entertain-

ment shows against appearances on news and current affairs; and unfortunately the national broadcaster – keen to have the interview – facilitated this strategy. Ahern made more appearances on light entertainment shows such as *The Late Late Show* than he did on current affairs programmes like *Prime Time*.

More significantly for political reportage, Ahern operated a media policy that can be defined as being ‘on-the-run’. His style of leadership involved a near permanent campaign strategy with a full weekly diary of engagements in various constituencies. He was permanently ‘on-the-road’, visiting schools and community centres, opening factories, hotels, public houses and, even in 2007, a bathroom showroom. The strategy was to move the centre of political activity not just out of the Dáil chamber but also away from Leinster House. The media organisations followed so much so that many political reporters now do most of the work outside Leinster House. With the coverage of politics moving beyond parliament the traditional briefing system for members of the Political Correspondents Group has been considerably weakened. If reporters wanted a direct response from Ahern they got it on the road in the form of the so-called ‘doorstep’ interview. Ahern would speak to reporters either as he entered an event or on his way out afterwards. Reporters would form a scrum-of-sorts adjacent to the Taoiseach. Five or six questions would be asked by five or six different reporters. It would be hard to envisage a De Valera or a Costello operating such a system but the doorstep suited the rolling news agenda of the broadcast media. Bulletins were freshened up with the latest sound clip from the Taoiseach. The door-step also suited Ahern – they were short and allowed for sound bite responses demanded by the hourly news reporters – and avoided the type of inquiry that is characteristic of a sit-down interview, traditional media conference or experienced across the chamber in parliament from his political opponents. Ahern could claim to have been widely available to the media but the terms of his availability and accessibility made it easier for the government to control the news agenda.

The Rise of the Pundit Class

The coverage of Irish politics and major political and parliamentary events changed significantly during the era of social partnership and Bertie Ahern’s tenure in office. But the changes did not just arise from the downgrading of the Parliamentary Press Gallery and the increased use of the doorstep interview to deliver a media message. There have also been changes in journalism practice. Whereas traditionally readers and viewers received hard political reporting and straight coverage of parliament, they are now treated increasingly to political reporting as commentary and adversarial political journalism which entertains as much as it informs and educates. Colour writing and gossip columns now take precedence over straight political reporting. Without doubt, the rise in the number of reporters has led to greater competition of which Horgan somewhat optimistically recorded, ‘the lobby’s growth in size – has contributed to a much greater competitiveness among political journalists which will in the future, with luck, result in better political journalism for the benefit of the public’ (Horgan, 2001, p. 270).

It is, however, uncertain if the growth in the membership of the Parliamentary Press Gallery has been matched by a corresponding increase in reporting standards. As far back as 1988 Manning was expressing concern:

And I would claim that there is a minority of people in the lobby who don't understand politics at all and are much more interested in using the lobby pass to get a story about the scandal of some personality that will help to sell their newspaper ... The fact is that personality and the theatre of politics mean much more in terms of selling the paper than substance ... (Manning, 1988).

There is little doubt that Manning's assessment has become the norm although it has to be stressed it is a norm that is not unique to the coverage of Irish politics. Indeed, Conboy has argued that 'there is a great deal of analysis of the processes involved and probing of the rhetoric of politics rather than a straightforward reporting of political events and policies as facts' (Conboy, 2004: 170). Some of this change may be attributed to a media response to the increased news management skills of politicians and their advisors – a reaction to spin – as well as the lack of ideological distinction between the main political parties in Ireland. But part of the change may also be due to the coexistence of less hard news and more media outlets, with the latter factor providing a commercial profit and ratings drive towards news generation in both publicly and privately owned media organisations. During his period as spokesman for Tony Blair, Alastair Campbell concluded, 'there's frankly not that much massive news around most days' – and resultingly to fill editorial space there has been an expansion in commentary and what can be called the 'pundit class'. More media time is now devoted to mediated political commentary by so-called – and self-styled – experts who are given a standing on par with, and often above, elected politicians. The contributions of serving Members of Parliament now compete for media space with former politicians, failed politicians, lobbyists and public relations consultants.

The rise of the Irish pundit class largely coincided with the advent of the peace process in Northern Ireland and the reduction in the hard news that the contemporary conflict generated. The space vacated by coverage of Northern Irish affairs has been filled in part by political punditry which has focused on the corruption revelations of the 1990s and the various tribunals of inquiry established to investigate unethical links between politics and business. In order to justify their existence, the pundit class need something to talk about. The spotlight on political scandals has played to their natural instincts to focus on the ease of process over complex policy issues. It is not unsurprising that in this environment, where pundits need material to talk about, opinion polls have come to dominate coverage of politics. It has been commented upon that during the 2007 general election, 'the treatment of individual poll results during the campaign is quite ritualistic' (Brandenburg and Zalinski, 2007: 177). But it is true that even in non-election periods the significance given to opinion polls has increased dramatically, and rather than assist the quality of political debate, the reporting of opinion polls results tends towards over-interpretation of small statistical changes. For example, during the 2007 general election the broadsheet newspapers all proclaimed a bounce for Fianna Fáil on 11 May; a severe slump on 15 May, and a last minute recovery on 21 May. 'The *Irish Daily Mail*, for example, saw the poll on 11 May as spelling 'doom for Enda' and the one on 15 May as leaving 'Ahern rocked by poll slump', despite virtually identical figures for both parties in each of those polls' (Brandenburg and Zalinski, 2007: 177).

Conclusion

The role of the Parliamentary Press Gallery has changed fundamentally since Foley wrote his treatment of its historical evolution in 1993. The factors driving these developments are varied and include the shift in power away from parliament, the attitude of Bertie Ahern towards parliament, changing news values and definitions of what constitutes news and the rise of pundit-driven media. The consequences for the Parliamentary Press Gallery are significant. Its power and influence has been lessened as has that of the Political Correspondents Group. The one change which could be introduced – and progressed by the gallery itself – would be to dispense with the secretive briefings between government representatives and a self-created elite cabal of reporters. Writing before the recent innovations at Westminster Farrell described the similar systems in London and Dublin as operating: ‘...a lobby system in which regular briefings are only given to a select group of accredited journalists usually on a non attributable basis. This creates a much more secretive form of Cabinet-media relationship, frequently characterised by leaks, often inspired and manipulated’ (quoted in Horgan, 2001). In an era when the proceedings of parliament are available on television, radio and the internet, it is an anachronism that a formalised secretive media system – that runs against what journalism is supposed to be about – should continue to prevail in Leinster House. It would be preferable if both sides dispensed with the secrecy and followed the Westminster model of open access of all accredited journalists to a televised briefing system.

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HOLLYWOOD REPRESENTATIONS OF IRISH JOURNALISM: A Case Study of Veronica Guerin

Pat Brereton

THIS PAPER EMANATES FROM an interest in how the journalist profession is represented on film. This discussion is framed, broadly, by an effort to gauge the performative nature of journalists, from 'hard-boiled' press hacks to egomaniacal TV reporters, while situating the vocation within conventional media studies, which privileges political and ethical indicators like 'the Fourth Estate' or as 'Public Watchdog'.

Most recently in the *Guardian*, Stephen Armstrong presented an overview of how journalists are portrayed on film (12 May 2008), while focusing on an ITV series *Midnight Man*, where the journalist starring James Nesbitt ends up literally on a rubbish heap looking for a story. Armstrong's opinion piece sites a long list of classics that foreground the role of the journalist, including *Superman* (1932), *His Girl Friday* (1940) (which Armstrong regards as the best) *Ace in the Hole* (1951), *All the President's Men* (1976), right up to *The Bourne Ultimatum* (2007) where a *Guardian* journalist was totally expendable in the pursuit of Jason Bourne's struggle to find his true identity. Meanwhile, Professor Brian McNair, who is currently writing a study of journalists on film, disagreed with Armstrong's overall estimation in a follow-up letter to the newspaper. McNair sites George Clooney's portrayal of Ed Murrow as near saintly in *Good Night and Good Luck* (2007) and asserts that the best journalist films which have stood the test of time are those, such as Oliver Stone's *Salvador* (1986) or Michael Winterbottom's *A Mighty Heart* (2007), which avoid stereotypes and engage with the complexity of the profession in an increasingly uncertain world.

Surprisingly within film studies there have been few academic studies of journalists on film, but in this paper I will focus on Irish journalism in particular and the iconic status of Veronica Guerin. The paper will try to uncover how the heroic/maverick journalist image is articulated and framed by two adaptations of her life, which in turn speak to recurring representations of normative journalistic practice. Guerin's representation on film certainly foregrounds several long standing media debates around the ethics of performance and deserves close attention.

Both films are based on the true story of a *Sunday Independent* journalist who was assassinated by drug dealers in 1996, a killing that has had a major impact on Ireland. (It is interesting to note that another journalist Martin O'Hagan, killed by Loyalists in the North of Ireland while working for the *Sunday World*, has achieved comparatively little celebrity status and is all but forgotten.) What was it about the Veronica Guerin story in particular that captured the imagination of Ireland and the world? At the outset one could suggest that this heroic and universal story of human sacrifice is somewhat reminiscent of a recurring trope of an Irish self-sacrificing mythos and played into stereotypical clichés for an American director to draw upon.

The narrative conforms to a 'feel good' Hollywood brand of individualised heroes fighting for justice. Only through strong individuals making a stand for what is transparently 'good and right', will change for the better take place. Such simplistic narratives usually privilege personal agency while negating the effectiveness of systemic re-organization in the fight against political and other societal problems. Re-affirming 'screen theory' debates from the 1970s, the Hollywood narrative structure – with its need for clearly identifiable heroes and villains and transparent progression of human agency towards the resolution of problems – is considered incapable of radical or counter-hegemonic articulation of social or political realities. Nevertheless, one wonders if this apparent structural difficulty also belies a more complex engagement in representing the journalistic performance of this tragic heroine, much less explaining the pleasure and engagement of such a storyline for an Irish audience.

A Brief Overview of Journalists in Crime Film

In defining and framing constitutive attributes of the performance of journalism on screen, film analysis might set out to explore how representations and characterisations of particular aspects of the journalistic persona, including race, gender, class, or some specific aspect of professional practice, are represented and performed on film. The defining attributes encoded would be examined to tease out a taxonomy around what is normative or aberrant. Within journalistic representation, we could also trace which modalities of behaviour are promoted, encouraged or critiqued within filmic representations over a period of time. Furthermore, in this exploration we could call on a pre-occupation of media studies for showing how popular texts can be read as a barometer of changing ideological and consensual values and normative behaviour protocols over a period of time. The crime genre is often read as the nearest equivalent format which deals specifically with journalistic investigations alongside police investigations.

Historians of film genres categorise the 1930s and 40s 'policers' as the classic period involving stories of police investigations, evoking a 'law and order' thesis, frequently designed to preserve the ideological status-quo.¹ The genre usually focuses on a male private detective trying to solve some enigma or other. A range of narrative devices are used to take audiences through the labyrinthine under-world of crime and deviancy, where more normative behaviour is sometimes difficult to determine. But of course this journey provides vicarious pleasures for audiences and is testament to the genre's enduring appeal. The journalist is often situated as a key agent in such investigation, as exemplified by a growing back catalogue of Hollywood films.²

Classic narratives which explicitly foreground journalistic agency include the non-crime narrative *Citizen Kane*, which has a near-anonymous journalist who becomes a

¹ For example there are extensive studies of British crime drama from the benevolent representations of *Dixon of Dock Green* compared with the harsher, American influenced (*French Connection* et al) *The Sweeney*, which emanates from 1970s popular cultural norms.

² For example some other press/journalist driven Hollywood films include: *Ace in the Hole (The Big Carnival)*, 1951, Billy Wilder; *Absence of Malice*, 1981, Sydney Pollack; *Between the Lines*, 1977, Joan Michlin Silver; *Circle of Deceit*, 1988, Volker Schlöndorff; *Citizen Kane*, 1940, Orson Welles; *Cry Freedom*, 1985, Richard Attenborough; *Defence of the Realm*, 1985, David Drury; *Foreign Correspondent*, 1940, Alfred Hitchcock; *His Girl Friday*, 1940, Howard Hawks; *Hudsucker Proxy*, 1994, Joel Coen; *Salvador*, 1983, Oliver Stone; *Shock Corridor*, 1963, Samuel Fuller; *The Front Page*, 1931, Lewis Milestone; *The Killing Field*, 1984, Roland Joffe; *The Man who shot Liberty Valence*, 1962, John Ford; *The Philadelphia Story*, 1940, George Cukor; *The Quiet American*, 1956, Joseph Mankiewicz; *The Sweet Smell of Success*, 1957, Alexander MacKendrick.

conduit for the various, often conflicting stories that are told on the journey towards discovering the meaning of 'Rosebud', the last word spoken by the eccentric media mogul, who was based on the real-life press-baron William Randolph Hearst. The enigma of a man's life becomes the focus of the story and a journalistic investigation is used as a narrative device to anchor and progress the story.

Conspiracy thrillers became more dominant after the Watergate scandal in the 1970s which spawned many Hollywood films, most notably *All the President's Men* with Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman playing the two heroic investigative *Washington Post* reporters, whose work lead to the impeachment of President Nixon. This important and oft-cited journalist film uses celebrity method actors to frame the performance of journalism. Hoffman in a recent documentary spoke of how they both learned each other's lines, so that they could almost merge into one investigative journalist. Bonnie Brennen (2003) asserts how the film normalises the ideology of professional practice which privileges 'hard work' and 'sweat not melodrama', using a 'three-point confirmation of sources'. Discovering the truth and uncovering a hidden mystery echoes a wide number of well-delineated film stories from the most prevalent crime detectives to the linguistic dexterity of the judiciary and courtroom dramas. Journalism serves its rightful place as protector of the innocent and by exposing corruption in many of these stories.

A common trope that pervades much of these investigations is the price that has to be paid to secure information to solve the enigma. Often as a consequence the law-abiding investigator becomes equally corrupt and decadent, as exemplified in other genres like westerns, e.g. *The Searchers* (1956), or war films, e.g. *Apocalypse Now* (1979). Meanwhile for crime-busters or journalists like Guerin, as we discover later, their domestic and private lives often suffer greatly, on film at least, because of their single-minded drive to do their job as they see fit, rather than brook any interference from authorities.

More recently with the rise of so-called postmodernist texts, which have become more ironic, self-reflexive and parodic, while often displaying a breakdown of coherent identity or agency, the role of such characters have become much more problematic. See for example recent neo-noir detectives like *Memento* (2003) or the journalistic representation in *Three Kings* (1999). In the latter ostensibly anti-war film, portraying dramatic incidents with a backdrop of the first Gulf War, a minor role is afforded to a female journalist Adriana Cruz played by Nora Dunn, who is striving to attain professional recognition. Nonetheless, her suspect motivations are clearly questioned and parodied throughout the film.³ For instance in one scene, when she happens upon an ecological disaster with birds coated in oil, she cries tears of emotional empathy on witnessing such a disaster. Yet she quickly concludes that such a story is 'so done' and therefore has lost any significance. Hopefully less cynically, many working journalists can find a balance between the changing fashions and fads around what are considered commercially successful news values.

More locally, actresses like Cate Blanchett and Joan Allen must learn (often using the sort of method-style acting displayed in *All the President's Men*) how to embody the real life, flesh and blood journalistic persona of Guerin. We can also trace a range of

³ Incidentally, as my cursory trawl of film history suggests, most successful journalistic representations on film tend to be male driven; female professionals on the other hand tend to be more suspect as *Three Kings* suggests and this is also implicit in ways with the representations of Veronica Guerin.

other performative indicators, which are used to represent her as a journalist. Obvious characteristics might include the use of a notebook or proficient typing skills,⁴ or even the technique used by the actors to interview people. All of these skills are beyond normative everyday practices and all help to foreground and sometimes exaggerate how journalism is performed, while helping to illustrate what is valorised or not. Finding appropriate attributes or even visual correlatives to represent the profession becomes the actor's primary *modus operandi*. Yet presumably much of the vocational day to day work of any profession, including journalism, remains indistinguishable, being no different from other 'desk jobs'. However, as discovered when talking to prospective journalist students, many are attracted by the 'excitement' and 'fame' of the profession and are only disabused of such impressions after entering the workplace. Consequently identifying in detail how aspects of role-play are dramatically realised, while promoting a misleading affirmation of fame-journalism, is worth investigating and provide rich insights into normative (fictionalised) professional patterns.

Journalism and Cultural Studies

Keith Windschuttle in 1998 attacked the use of cultural and media studies in teaching journalism programmes in Australia. In a special issue on 'Media Wars' in the journal *Media International Australia*, he called for a return to what he believes to be the 'Holy Trinity' of journalism education: an empirical method and 'realist' worldview; an ethical orientation to audiences and the 'public interest'; and a commitment to clear writing. (1999: 9) Like many other critics, Windschuttle is particularly concerned about the influences of poststructuralist theory on media analysis and dismisses cultural studies as a body of theory that is hopelessly relativist, denying the existence of history (which it certainly does not) and actively de-skills the students it is supposed to train.⁵

Graeme Turner counters however that:

journalists could acknowledge that their profession systematically produces an insider discourse, which privileges certain kinds of information, certain kinds of sources of information, and ultimately produces their fetish – *the figure of the journalist*. [italics added] More than any of the academic discourses, journalism over-invests in its occupational mythologies (2000).

Turner's exposition around the mythic figure of the journalist has important implications for the performability of such a role within film.

John Hartley continues in a similar vein, affirming that the

occupational ideology [of hard/serious journalism] is founded on violence, which is a primary theory of journalism for practitioners. Its basic thesis is

⁴ An anecdote regarding one of our multimedia students at Dublin City University, who as part of their work placement helped to design a computer programme to present the illusion of Ms. Blanchett typing. While this SFX display of journalistic competency was not used in the end, the story signals the importance of such display as an index of professional competency. Of course many working practitioners use two fingers and have no shorthand skills, but this does not compromise their overall journalist performance. On the big screen however, finding effective indicators of performative journalism is what matters.

⁵ As we know semiotics, structuralism, deconstruction and most particularly postmodernism have all come in for ridicule as obscure, complicated and, it is often strongly implied, bogus influences on the teaching of the humanities. (Turner, 2000).

that truth is violence, reality is war, news is conflict. It's not just a theory either – it's a desire. The demand of the reading public, the need for democratic accountability and the ideal type of the journalist, all converge in a passion for conflict. If journalism is a 'profession' at all, then it is the profession of violence. Journalism's heroic figures are the combative interviewer who won't take no for an answer, the war junkie following death around the world, the adversarial investigative reporter, the crusading paper or programme. The good journalistic watchdog fights for stories that someone doesn't want told; the best stories are those that expose violence and corruption concealed within seemingly respectable institutions, from tin-pot dictatorships to children's homes. Journalism is combat (Hartley, 2000).

Hartley sets such hard (violent) journalism in opposition to what he describes as the 'smiling professions' – the service/ PR industries – which interface with the public in the name of pleasure, entertainment, attractiveness, appeal and who popularise knowledge which is routinely despised by 'serious journalists'. This dichotomy probably applies to Irish journalism also, alongside the ever-present issue of the commercialization of Hollywood and its implications for indigenous filmic output. The Veronica Guerin story polarized such academic debates between tabloid sensationalism and the appeal of crime stories to sell newspapers at one level, as against the Fourth Estate role of 'serious' journalism to explain crime in Ireland on the other.

Journalistic Representations of Veronica Guerin

When the Sky Falls was the first filmic take on the Veronica Guerin story, with all the names changed, to avoid any direct correlation. The tag line on the video reads: '1996, a reporter uncovered the truth, now it's going to bury her'. Joan Allen plays Guerin, Patrick Bergin plays Detective Mackie and Pete Postlethwaite plays a small time criminal. The blurb on the VHS copy reads:

Dublin 1996. In a city where criminals are getting away with murder and the IRA is getting the blame, lone crime reporter Sinead Hamilton (Joan Allen) is determined to reveal what no one else has the courage to face. Aided by a veteran cop (Patrick Bergin) Hamilton uncovers a conspiracy so vast it promises to shake Ireland to its core. But when every truth is wrapped in a lie and every lead is part of a set-up, every step she takes might be her last.

This more authentic yet strangely dispassionate version, fails to connect with audiences on many counts as an effective fictional narrative. Nevertheless, it provides some sharper dialogue for any journalist debate, with a more explicit critique of the role of the '*Sunday Globe*' where the Guerin character eventually works. Much of the discursive analysis in the film is frequently delivered in a non-dramatic and low key fashion. As a consequence, this version got a poor press and did badly at the box office, while the later big budget *Veronica Guerin* became much more successful on all fronts.

Comparing the two filmic versions of the story, this latter Hollywood cinematic treatment wins hands down. While *Veronica Guerin* is certainly compromised in many ways, at least it provides a stronger sense of drama, empathy and enjoyment. Production started on March 4th on a budget of \$17 million and wrapped up early

in June 2002. The film's commercial success was registered by passing the €4.1 million mark by the end of 2003 in Ireland, higher than any other 'Irish' film.⁶ The casting of Cate Blanchett in the title role and her proficient Irish accent and likeness are considered by many as major reasons for its success in Ireland. Earlier candidates who might have taken the role include Winona Ryder, or Jodie Foster. Star theory and the 'commutation test'⁷ in particular can be used to gauge what Blanchett brings to the role compared with other contenders and can in turn be compared with Joan Allen's more staid and less celebrity-driven performance.

Film academic Harvey O'Brien suggests that writer Michael Sheridan was allegedly consulting with Guerin on a movie script. She specifically instructed him not to turn her life story into a glamorised tale of liberal martyrdom, but rather hoped for a story of how her journalistic crusade blew the lid on the Dublin drug trade and the high-level criminals behind it. The resulting film is *When the Sky Falls*, and it remains well meaning but poorly organised, according to O'Brien, with no sentimental overstatement. Whereas in the more 'Hollywood treatment' of *Veronica Guerin*, the 'darker and more potentially irresponsible traits of the obsessive journalist are less exposed'. The Blanchett representation had quite literally become a Hollywood martyr, while clearly concentrating on telling a 'heroic story'.⁸

Film reviews like much journalism is often dismissed by high-brow academic film criticism as disposable and frequently pandering to audience desire for neat evaluations, which assist punters in making choices over which film to attend. However, less recognition is afforded to how such analysis help shape, frame and even negotiate the multiple meanings of mass produced Hollywood, much less more art-house films. Furthermore, I would suggest that reviews frequently present the most interesting and incisive commentary on a film's nascent pleasures, while constructed within very tight time pressures. Nonetheless, such pronouncements require extensive contextualisation and unpacking of the various rhetorical and emotional journalistic conventions embedded within film reviews, in an attempt to tease out their meanings. A flavour of journalistic responses to *Veronica Guerin* includes the following:

RTE Interactive gives it four stars but worries about its 'Blockbuster pedigree', nevertheless the review considers it as 'an honest attempt' which tries to come to grips with 'a complex individual', while remaining dismissive of the 'over use' of Irish based jigs and reels and the film's ending, which it claims will irritate many.

The *Guardian* is much more dismissive, affirming how the film crams in every 'Oirish cliché in the book' and remains another 'self congratulatory anti-drug movie'?

The Observer suggests that so many students go into journalism because of 'heroic' journalists like in *All the Presidents Men*. Philip French goes on to suggest that this film should have romantic teenagers (following Cate Blanchett as a vital presence) lining up

6 What constitutes an Irish film of course remains contentious. The usual criteria used by EU research focuses on where finance for the film comes from. Consequently there are hardly any big budget Irish films. (See Flynn and Brereton, 2007).

7 The test tries to evaluate what an actor or star brings to a film by imagining the film with another actor and comparing their relative merits. (See Brereton, 2001).

8 See Harvey O'Brien's review in <http://homepage.eircom.net/~obrienh/veronica>

to get into journalism school. [Incidentally from a feminist perspective, mention is made by the critic of an odd aversion to a 'particular form of aggressive feminism that (apparently) has sprung up in Catholic countries such as Ireland and Italy'].

www.freemedia.com writes of Guerin defending the 'public's right to know'. She was murdered two days before she was due to address a conference in London on: '[D]ying to tell a story: Journalists at Risk'. The then Taoiseach, John Bruton described her death as 'an attack on democracy'.

Such reviews seek also to frame the role of journalism within contemporary society and fictional representations, like a TV crime series *Proof*, which also foregrounded the role of journalists in solving crime, remain a preoccupation of much analysis in the print media in particular.⁹ However to fully appreciate the textual meanings of such representations of journalists, one has to appreciate the social contexts and conventions in which such representations are framed.

Social Realist Conventions

From the poetic documentation of De Valera's 1930s Ireland, as represented in *Man of Aran*, to the recent revisionist appraisal of civil war politics in *Michael Collins* (1996) and *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* (2006), to what could be regarded as the more contemporary Americanisation of urban Irish identity in *Veronica Guerin*, Irish film has always been critiqued for its lack of historical accuracy, while at the same time questioned for its consensus-driven approach to important historical markers of Irish nationalism and identity. While indigenous culturally-sponsored Irish film is seen to have a more nuanced handle on such complex debates, the more derisory commercially-driven product is said to simply please its audience and worries less, if at all, about the comprehensiveness of its historical or factual truth telling. Dramatic narrative truth and believability is what matters in the end, rather than a coherent foregrounding of a totalising truth, or worrying excessively over historical accuracy. Witness recent Irish filmic debates regarding Sheridan's *In the Name of the Father* (1994) portrayal of the father and son serving time in the same prison – which didn't actually happen but was considered necessary to dramatise and heighten the emotional and political engagement of the film. Or for that matter, Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins* or Ken Loach's *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* and their differing heroic valorisation of a highly contested period for Irish nationalism, which had even more substantial historical errors to draw from.

⁹ In many ways *Proof*, a fictional TV series on RTE (Jan/Feb 2004 Monday 9.30) – reminiscent of *Midnight Man* and its evocation of the journalist on ITV – also provides an interesting extension of the journalistic exploration into the Dublin criminal underworld. Terry Corcoran (Finbar Lynch) is a journalist who looks like 'he sleeps in a dumpster'. When we first meet him he has cost his newspaper millions in damages and is being berated by his soon to be ex-boss for the 'trail of shite' he always leaves behind him. [A conventional Hollywood representation one might suggest of a rebel and protector of the innocent.]. Shane Hegarty in *The Irish Times* Jan 10th is however less than impressed with its 'music-video style that is more pleased with itself than it should be'. The series, he argues, 'flinches every convention of the urban thriller, but forget that these apply to the bigger, more complex cities of Britain and the US, so that when they are flung into a smaller pot they just won't fit'. *The Sunday Independent* review by Eilís O'Hanlon, titled 'Journalist Heroes? Aw, Shucks' also blames the aforementioned *All the Presidents Men* and the conscious creation of heroes. Before then in Hollywood she argues (with no textual evidence to back up to this contentious point) that they were mostly portrayed as unprincipled, drunken, lying shysters. Now we have good guys like Gabriel Byrne in *Defence of the Realm*. *Proof*, she concludes is in the 'same mould' as *Veronica Guerin*.

Generically, *When the Sky Falls* fits more neatly into the crime genre format with highly conventional and stereotypical evocations of criminals and the police. In particular Detective Mackie (Patrick Bergin) is represented as totally frustrated in his attempts to capture the criminals and blames resources being switched to protect the border with the North of Ireland. Like many Hollywood crime-busters, the detective becomes as devious and ruthless as the criminals, supporting the ethical position that the 'end justifies the means'. At one stage he complains to his superiors, in no uncertain terms, how 'if I had more manpower, rather than pissing about at the border', he could do his job and they would not 'look like fools' in the courts. In total frustration, he ends up asserting that 'if I had my way, I would put them up against the wall and shoot them'. Reminiscent of films like *The Untouchables* (1987), but lacking its ethical values, Mackie calls on his fellow officers to follow him in an attempt to capture the enemy, while citing the slogan over the police station which translates: 'let justice be done or the sky falls'.

Later Mackie helps Guerin get her story and assist in the 'fight against crime', but cursorily warns her that 'it could be dangerous'. That's okay, our intrepid journalist retorts, reminiscent of so many action adventure danger-junkies and echoes an ever-present generic convention of heroes who need excitement and danger above all else. Furthermore, at the arranged meeting with the IRA (Irish Republican Army), Guerin is informed that 'their methods may be different but their goals are the same' – namely getting crime and drugs off the streets. Earlier however it is suggested that she 'crossed the line' of an impartial journalist by becoming involved with an anti-drugs march. Later on getting her well deserved award for services to her profession, she pontificates that 'journalists should not be driven by intimidation' and that in Ireland 'we work under the most restrictive libel laws in the world', which makes it very hard for 'serious crime journalists to do their work'.

Unlike this provocative discursive analysis of journalism, *Veronica Guerin* provides numerous incidents which suggests dramatic fictional licence and produces some strange contemporary inaccuracies.

The Tony Gregory representation: Everyone in Ireland has knowledge of the public persona of the late Independent and anti-establishment Dublin inner city member of the Dáil. Hugh Linehan in a review for the *Irish Times* on 10/1/2004 sarcastically focuses on the 'plummy-voiced, tie-wearing Tony Gregory played by Garreth Keogh, who managed to rewrite the Constitution with a stroke of the pen while accepting the rapturous applause of the entire Oireachtas'. Such dramatic licence is only to be expected, the critic concludes in the Disney-fied versions of recent Irish history. Gregory, as back-bencher TD and political voice of Dublin's north inner-city is afforded the importance of a powerful Government establishment figure, I suppose, to explain the story for non-Irish audiences who require clear signifiers of officialdom.¹⁰ Whereas in *When the Sky Falls* such obvious inaccuracies are carefully avoided, the latter film fails to endear wider audiences with its more authentic documentary feel.

Heroic characterisation: Many critics have problems with understanding the psychology and motivation of Guerin, both in real life as well as in these filmic representations.

¹⁰ It is somewhat ironic in many 'pro-Irish' dramas on the Northern Irish Troubles that authentic 70s costuming of Irish 'victims' with their colourful shirts and flared trousers further serve to stereotype their 'lower class' and sartorial inelegance, compared with the more conventional and classically suited police class who are not locked inside a style time-warp.

For some she remains enigmatic, playing off the well trodden Christian myth of martyrdom. Some even wonder if there is some evidence almost of a 'death instinct' as part of a fatal flaw in her character. Was she naive or simply wilful in taking on the crime bosses in Ireland? Many critics affirm that her fictional character seemed to lack emotional depth, remaining a cipher, rather than a fully rounded agent of change. In particular her screen husband and family are poorly sketched out and there is no counterbalancing back-story line to offset the universal narrative of individual sacrifice and justice.

Representations of other journalists: There is a very negative representation of what is sometimes pejoratively described as 'hack journalism'. In both versions, Guerin is critiqued for not having the proper tools or skills to perform the lofty vocational role of a journalist. Yet she appears relatively well balanced with the requisite transferable skills for the profession; including passion, an inquiring mind and great tenacity among others, while at the same time foregrounding her logical business acumen, acquired through her earlier bookkeeping training.

Unlike *Citizen Kane*, which uses various memories and recreations by former friends and family, and even still acknowledges that these cannot explain the enigma of a life's work, such a conventional narrative structure can hardly hope to provide fresh insights into Guerin's motivation or rationale. What is omitted or ignored because of economies of time and conventional logics of classic narrative exposition, results in a filmic structure which is incapable of providing a more nuanced character and motivational study. The conventional Hollywood narrative trajectory simply requires representational obstacles to help question the motivation and actions of the hero. While her family does not adequately supply such conflict, other journalists serve this narrative function and become even more denigrated as a result.

What defines a good journalist remains problematic and often buried within the relentless drive of the story. The *Observer* review cites how in the film there is contempt for the majority of her fellow journalists who steered clear of potentially dangerous controversy while viewing her as a 'grandstanding outsider'. Some of the begrudging journalistic hacks appear to spend all of their time in the pub, somewhat reminiscent of a long tradition of Irish extras in several classic Irish films, including *The Quiet Man* and *Ryan's Daughter*. A female hack quips that she should spend some of her insurance money to do a course in 'proper journalism'. Such savage backbiting is also echoed in *When the Sky Falls*, when another journalist on a crime scene suggests to another hack that her employers would probably give her a bigger photograph with her copy than the well-known criminal, Martin Cahill ('The General'), who had just been murdered. Such begrudgery might perversely be regarded as endorsing a pervasive anti-intellectualism and an explicit criticism of non-celebrity journalists, since such sentiments are strongly criticised by the film. These representations help articulate a range of regressive stereotypes concerning the role and function of journalism, as reflected by the Australian 'media wars' cited above.

A journalist who worked with Independent Newspapers at the time suggests that such demonisation of other journalists fitted into a general movement against established journalistic practice and against those who represented the older and less overtly performative craft with its core values of objectivity, impartiality, comment free copy etc. This impression is picked up by the Emily O'Reilly biography and its articulation of the newspaper's culpability in her death. O'Reilly (a well known Irish journalist and more recently Ombudsman) incidentally did some extra scripting for one of the films as well

as writing a book on Guerin's life.¹¹ O'Reilly focuses on Vincent Browne, the *Irish Times* columnist who wrote at the time: 'the killing of Veronica Guerin, outrageous, abominable and tragic though it may be in personal terms, in no way compromises the freedom of the press in holding institutions of power accountable'. Browne stressed that the 'investigation of crime was tangential to the main role of the press. The police, the courts and the prison system are in place to look after the abuse of power on the part of crime bosses. Journalism's business meanwhile is to hold these institutions accountable for the way they cope with the crime bosses and the crime phenomenon' (O'Reilly, 1999: 47). This article was written two days after her death and caused a public furore. Soon after Browne 'apologised for his suggestion that her death may not have been directly linked to her work', but he did not withdraw his comments however, according to O'Reilly, about the 'proper role of journalism' (O'Reilly, 1999: 48).

The Hollywood Ending

Closure and endings are considered to have important ideological effects for audiences by promoting and reaffirming the status quo. The hegemonic 'Law and Order' thesis, as characterised in much crime drama is certainly affirmed through the voice-over in *Veronica Guerin* by the sympathetic police officer Chris Mulligan, played by Don Wycherley. The ending serves to legitimate her death/martyrdom with the evil criminals finally captured and brought to book, which is reminiscent of classic moralistic 1930s and 40s gangster films. Her death, the voice-over affirms, caused national outrage and led to a government crackdown on organised crime that netted more than 150 arrests. This valorisation of her heroic influence on the Irish body politic and the textual citing of the large number of journalists killed elsewhere in the world draws on the twin Hollywood emotions of deep empathy and universal justice, which is all but avoided in *When the Sky Falls*.

At a formal aesthetic (if apolitical) level, one is struck by the musical soundtrack's ability to increase the emotional excess of the final shooting of our heroine, an outcome that has already been presented at the start of *Veronica Guerin*, designed for narrative exegesis and also to produce a more operatic expression of mythic resonance. From an Irish filmic perspective, Jim Sheridan comes to mind through his mastery of such excess, with *In the Name of the Father* (1993) or *In America* (2003) among others. In this Hollywood treatment the emotional effect is reinforced by an unseen boy singing the potent Irish ballad *The Fields of Athenry* as well as the hypnotic voice of Sinéad O'Connor, while the audience is visually treated to a birds-eye view looking down on the Naas road near Dublin, as her body lies in a painterly repose with her eyes wide open, taking on our fears of mortality. Her body is symmetrically positioned in her sporty red car through an open sun-roof, connotating at one level her brash fame-driven style of tabloid journalism, framed by other less distinguished vehicles, with their occupants providing witness to such a tragic and violent death. Whereas in *When the Sky Falls*, the recreation of her death is less dramatic, both aurally and visually, exemplified by her car, sans sunroof; hence the similar birds-eye view lacks the former's cinematic potency.

¹¹ O'Reilly's opening salvo in her study is a quote from Guerin's editor in the *Sunday Independent* Aengus Fanning: '[M]ost Newspapers might see journalism as a higher calling and the market may be incidental. I think we live or die by the market'. Guerin began her career in journalism relatively late in life in 1990 with the *Sunday Business Post*. In 1993 she moved to the *Sunday Tribune* and the following year to the *Sunday Independent*.

In conclusion, the fictional Guerin remains a generic rebel outside the law and is somewhat reminiscent of the iconic tragic heroines in feminist films like *Thelma and Louise* (1991); her speeding offences necessitated her final court appearance. Her mother, played by Brenda Flicker, asks a priest at the start of *Veronica Guerin* to pray that she would lose her licence. Ironically her minor miracle as she emotes in being let off such offences by the judge leads to her murder. In the long pantheon of Irish martyrs there are so few female examples; consequently gender remains a unique feature of this tale. Finally her dramatic killing legitimates an acceptable form of [Irish] voyeurism, reminiscent of the ur-American spectacle around the murder of JFK for instance, projecting a dramatic fictionalised national simulacrum for the violent world we live in. Hollywood treatment helps to frame this tragic Irish story in both universal and mythic terms. In Ireland where martyrdom and death have been celebrated as part of a religious, political and historical ritual, such a Hollywood film helps to reinvigorate an Irish mythos using global characteristics of criminality and the striving of contemporary public watchdogs to 'do the right thing'. *Veronica Guerin* most especially provides a potent journalistic mythos of heroic sacrifice, which emanates through a noble line of Irish martyrs. But whether we know any more about the real life story of the Irish journalist remains highly questionable.

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[Select Journalist Filmography]

- A Mighty Heart* (2007) Michael Winterbottom
- All the President's Men* (1976) Alan J Pakula
- Citizen Kane* (1941) Orson Welles
- Defence of the Realm* (1985) David Drury
- Three Kings* (1999) David O Russell
- Veronica Guerin* (2003) Joel Schumacher
- When the Sky Falls* (1999) John McKenzie

INFRINGEMENT NATION: Morality, Technology and Intellectual Property

Eadaoin O'Sullivan

[A] COMBINATION OF EASE of access, and the demands of new businesses, [have] contributed toward a shift towards viewing copyright works as simply 'content' needed to make a particular project work. It has also led to increased pressure on copyright owners, both to release their works for exploitation by others, and to do so more and more cheaply. – Cliodhna O'Sullivan, *Public Affairs and Ireland*, Summer 2005.

2004 could be said to represent a watershed of sorts in the Irish public's consciousness of copyright law. June 16th of that year was the 100th anniversary of Bloomsday, and events, under the umbrella of the 'ReJoyce Festival' were organised all over Ireland to mark it. Some, famously, ran square up against the intransigence of the Joyce estate, notorious up to then in some (legal, academic) circles for its tight grip on the copyright of James Joyce's work; in the wake of 2004's Bloomsday celebrations, this notoriety soon became widespread.

It's an act of rebellion to stand and read aloud from James Joyce – it's as if we're in the 1930s again. – Helen Monaghan, director of the James Joyce Centre, *Sunday Business Post*, 13 June 2004.

Media coverage of the estate's challenges to those who wished to exploit Joyce's work during the Bloomsday celebrations was extensive, and uniformly condemnatory of the estate. The media's condemnation revolved around an idea that the Joyce estate was exercising unreasonable control over (it was implied) works which were the cultural and spiritual property of the Irish nation. Spectacularly, the Irish government, acting in response to a letter received from the estate's solicitors, rushed an amendment to the 2000 *Copyright and Related Rights Act* through the Seanad to allow for the public display of Joyce manuscripts in the National Library. (The purchase of these manuscripts was itself the subject of some controversy, beyond the scope of this paper.) The original act had made no provision for such display. The estate did not specifically threaten legal action, but merely pointed out that the government's intended exhibition of the manuscripts would be in breach of copyright. The latter's response was the insertion of a new subsection (7A) into section 40 of the act:

For the avoidance of doubt, no infringement of any right created by this Part in relation to an artistic or literary work occurs by reason of the placing on

display the work, or a copy thereof, in a place or premises to which members of the public have access. (*Copyright and Related Rights (Amendment) Act*, 2004.)

The events described above raise a number of issues. In no particular order: a jaundiced media and public attitude toward copyright; the interests of copyright holders; the interests of those who wish to exploit copyrighted works; and, though it is an extreme example, the malleability of copyright legislation in the face of powerful lobby groups. (This example is extreme as the lobby group in question is also the group with the power to amend legislation; also, the amendment was couched in terms of its being ‘for the avoidance of doubt’).¹

As a jumping off point for an examination of the increased demand for easy and cheap exploitation of copyrighted works the Bloomsday controversies are salient because they reflect a conflict between the rights holders of traditional content (i.e. literary works) and traditionally powerful elites – government, academics, and other arbiters of elite culture. Because the battle was fought between elites, I would argue that it helped to normalise the idea that the exploitation of copyright content was permissible and desirable in a way that contests over new media (such as *A & M Records Inc vs Napster* and *MGM vs. Grokster*) could not.

Intellectual Property laws confer an exclusive right to exploit an invention or creation commercially for a limited period. These rights are essentially negative in that they protect the copying of the protected innovations. They do not ensure profitability but if the Intellectual Property Right is combined with a successful product the legal exclusivity provides a stimulus to innovation by acting both as a reward to the inventor or creator, and as a stimulus to innovation more generally (Anderton, 2007). Copyright represents a balancing act by legislators between different interests. On the one hand, it offers protection, as noted, to innovators, and in so doing seeks to foster further innovation. On the other, it also reflects a perceived public interest in facilitating certain kinds of access to copyrighted works that do not require the copyright holder’s permission. These are known as ‘fair dealing exemptions’ (‘fair use’ in the US). Fair dealing exemptions inscribed in Irish law include certain types of non-commercial use (such as for research or study) (*Copyright and Related Rights (Amendment) Act*, article 50) and uses for the purposes of criticism, review, or the reporting of current events (article 51).

The question of copyright law and copyright norms arises with each round of technological innovation. Copyright and digital rights are the issue of the moment, but we should bear in mind that copyright law, while pledged to uphold innovation, has inscribed within it the struggle to keep pace with this innovation. For example, Kaplan (1967) stated some time ago:

As a veteran listener at many lectures by copyright specialists over the past decade, I know it is almost obligatory for a speaker to begin by invoking the

1 However, the comments of some Dáil members on the introduction of the amendment should be noted. Brendan Howlin said ‘It is amazing that at the last minute a specific new legislative measure should have to be introduced into this House to avoid doubt about the legal right of the National Library to present State owned original Joyce works’, while Philip Hogan of Fine Gael observed ‘I am strongly of the view that we should not legislate our way out of problems at every hand’s turn’ (Dáil Éireann, 2004).

communications revolution of our time, [and] then to pronounce upon the inadequacies of the present copyright act (p. 1).

Were we so minded, we could go back as far as 1710 for examples of the balancing act between protection and innovation. The first legislation for copyright, the *Statute of Anne*, was brought into law in Britain on foot of the activities of ‘printers, book-sellers, and other persons [who] have of late frequently taken the liberty of printing, reprinting, and publishing ... books, and other writings, without the consent of the authors or proprietors of such books and writings’ – activities made possible by the declining cost and increasing availability of printing presses.

We shall go back only as far as the 1980s, to the original modern copyright case célèbre – Sony vs Universal City Studios (1984)² (the Betamax case) in the US. Sony were sued for their distribution of the VCR recorder. The entertainment industry perceived the VCR, which enabled the public to record and copy film and broadcast content, as a massive threat. The judgement in that case found that the fact that a VCR has infringing uses was not enough for the finding of contributory infringement by the manufacturers, Sony. In England, CBS Songs vs Amstrad Consumer Electronics PLC., (1988),³ (the latter, a manufacturer of double cassette decks) was the test case for contributory infringement, and was decided in favour of the manufacturer. This case paved the way for newer reproduction technologies such as MP3 players. It is significant to note, as will become clear below, that in neither case did the entertainment industry pursue individual users of either VCRs or double cassette recorders for infringement.

Napster was the first company to allow individuals to download freely and quickly large quantities of copyrighted content. It was found liable for copyright infringement in the US on the basis that while the company did not itself download the songs, it did have the songs on its server. In the wake of this judgement, ‘peer to peer’ (P2P) software was developed. This software was created in part to circumvent the liability of a central server holding copyrighted content. As the term implies, P2P software allows users’ computers to communicate and share files directly. It also leaves individual users, rather than the P2P software developers or distributors, open to liability for copyright infringement. And, indeed, many were found so liable, creating a wave of negative publicity for record industries all over the world.

In 2005 the US Supreme Court – in MGM Studios vs. Grokster Limited (2005)⁴ – found against the latter, a firm which distributed free P2P software. MGM had sued Grokster for copyright infringement on the basis that the defendants had knowingly and intentionally distributed their software to enable users to infringe copyright works. The judgement hinged on the fact that Grokster was seen to have induced copyright infringement through its publicity material, and as such was quite particular to this case, however, it was seen at the time as significant, as it suggested that if P2P software distributors could be found liable for contributory infringement, the record industry would be less likely to sue individuals, and would make these companies targets for redress instead. The industry, how-

² Sony Corporation of America vs Universal City Studios, Inc. (1984) 464 US 417

³ CBS Songs vs Amstrad Consumer Electronics PLC., (1988) 2 All ER 484

⁴ MGM Inc. vs Grokster Ltd. (2005) 545 U.S. 913.

ever, continued in its pursuit of individual infringers; the *Washington Post* (31/12/07) reported in 2007 that more than 20,000 lawsuits had been filed in the US against individual downloaders; in Ireland, June 2007 saw IRMA obtain a High Court Order to obtain the names and addresses of 23 individual downloaders, with a view to prosecution (www.irma.ie/index2.htm).

P2P filesharing is unlikely to fall into the rubric of fair use in any jurisdiction – the copyright holders, in this instance, very firmly do have the right of law on their side. The fashion in which they have sought to uphold these rights, however, has been unfortunate. It has painted the content providers as cruel behemoths stomping on the little guy, with the little guy consequently losing some of his moral ambivalence about receiving content for free.

The European Union Information Society Directive was passed in 2001 in an effort to harmonise copyright law across the Union. Its list of fair use exceptions, like the Irish list, is limited: ‘teaching, scientific research, and certain other private study purposes’, ‘criticism, review, caricature, parody and pastiche’ and ‘certain purposes relating to the dissemination of news, political speeches and public lectures’ (article 5(3)). Such an exhaustive list of exceptions, argue some, was ill-conceived, and poorly fixed to deal with the rapid developments in information technology (see Hugenholtz, 2000). In 2006, the EU announced a fresh set of copyright directives, commonly known as IPRED2 (European Parliament, 2007).⁵ However they did not take the opportunity to expand the scope of fair use:

Member States shall ensure that the fair use of a protected work, including such use by reproduction in copies or audio or by any other means, for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship or research, does not constitute a criminal offence (article 3).

Developments in copyright law in the US and the EU have been argued to be ‘a story of increasing monopoly ... [and] progressive expansion of reward’ for copyright holders, according to Daithí O’Dell (2007), writing on the Cearta blog. O’Dell argues that ‘every extension of the reach of copyright protection should have been accompanied by a concomitant flexibility in the exceptions, such as fair dealing’. This, he argues, has not happened, and ‘the relationship has become progressively unbalanced and is now increasingly tilted toward the copyright holder’.

This imbalance in copyright protection is well illustrated by digital rights management technologies (DRMs). DRMs are incorporated into much legally available online content, as well as DVDs, and, in the US, into some television broadcasts (to prevent their storage on new hard-drive recorders like TiVo). They tether digital works to particular platforms to prevent format shifting. The *US Digital Millennium Copyright Act* (1998:17 U.S.C. article 1201 (a) (b)), specifically encourages their use as does the EU’s IPRED2. In 2006, in response to submissions by, among others, the anti-DRM lobby group the Electronic Frontier Foundation, the US Copyright Office asserted its position thus:

At most, (anti-DRM) commentators have asserted that technological measures have made it difficult to make copies of musical and audio-visual works for

⁵ IPRED2 was originally mooted in 2005 and the latest amendments date to April 2007.

use on other devices – a use that is either infringing, or, even if it were non-infringing, would be merely a convenience which is insufficient to support a claim for an exemption’ (US Copyright Office, 2006).

In a keynote address to OSCOM (the International Association for Open Source Content Management) in 2002 Stanford Law Professor and founder of the Stanford Centre for Internet and Society Lawrence Lessig noted that legal usage of copyright works is tri-partite.⁶ It consists of regulated use (uses specifically covered in a copyright license); unregulated use (not regulated by copyright licenses, but not necessarily illegal – as an example of unregulated use he suggests sitting on a book), and fair use. He argues that the concept of fair use has suffered most with the advent of DRM technology. Where previously users could engage in fair and unregulated uses of works (lending a book to a friend; creating a collage of copyrighted photographs for a non-commercial purpose as examples of each) without fear of legal reprisal, the traceability of unregulated or non-regulated acts, along with the restrictions imposed on use by DRM technology, has had the result that ‘the use of creative output [has never] been more controlled’. Regulation of the use of copyright works has been taken from the hands of legislators and vested instead in those with an interest in protecting such works: ‘Technology is better at controlling how online media is used than the law is at controlling its use in the real world’. Not only is policing technology far easier and more effective than real world policing of copyright infringement, it leaves no room for examination of individual cases as they arise. While European fair usage exemptions are limited, as noted, post-hoc judgement on such cases offers at least the prospect of a degree of wriggle room for defendants. As the British Court of Appeals, in deciding on the case of *Ashdown vs Telegraph Group* (2002)⁷ observed ‘It [is] necessary for the Court to look closely at the facts of individual cases – as indeed it must whenever a ‘fair dealing’ defense is raised’.

The demands of users, despite the best efforts of the entertainment industry, are making themselves felt. The inconvenience of DRM technologies are, in fact – contrary to the US Copyright Office’s assertion – sufficient to support a claim for exemption. One online music store (7digital.com) reports that non-DRM protected music outsells its protected counterpart four-to-one (reported in the *Guardian*, 10/12/07). In light of figures like this, almost certainly, EMI announced in late 2007 that it would remove DRM protection from content sold through iTunes, while Universal made a similar move, removing protection from classical and jazz music downloads.

Every time a user transfers a song from CD to MP3 in Ireland (s)he infringes copyright, under article 201 (1) of the *Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000*. The vast disparity between the law and public norms is well demonstrated in this. Millions of songs are format shifted annually in Ireland by hundreds of thousands of MP3 player users, many of whom are unaware that they are in breach of copyright in doing so; many of whom would think its illegality ludicrous if they did know.

Even for those enjoying, under law, a ‘privileged exception’ which allows them to legally format shift – lecturers and students needing extracts from DRM protected

6 For a full transcript of the speech, see <http://www.oreillynet.com/pub/a/policy/2002/08/15/lessig.html?page=1>

7 *Ashdown vs Telegraph Group* (2002) Ch.149 CA.

media; or the physically handicapped, who need to format shift media to make it accessible, amongst others – DRM is frustrating. In the first empirical study of its kind, Patrícia Akester (2009) looked at how DRM impacted on such groups – such as the British Library, film lecturers and students, and the blind or sight-impaired (who need to run e-books through a screen reader to create accessible audio or large text versions). She found that all of these groups reported frustrations with DRM, as it is too blunt a tool to allow for their privileged exceptions. There is a complaints and redress procedure available, but in general it was found to be too cumbersome to be useful. Consequently, at least in the case of film lecturers and students, as well as the sight-impaired, many individuals are resorting to what is coyly described in the paper as ‘self-help’ measures to circumvent DRM – in other words, they are downloading illegal copies of films or books unencrypted with the technology.

Europe is tending to be more progressive than the US in realigning law and norm. In Britain, *The Gowers Review of Intellectual Property* (2006) recommends a ‘limited private copying exception, which will allow customers to format shift legitimately purchased content’. Commenting on the review, the British Intellectual Property Office (2008) notes in connection with format shifting:

The current law is difficult to enforce in this area. Not only may it be difficult to justify the illegality of such an activity but, because the restrictions are seen as unreasonable, they can often be damaging to the public’s perception of copyright. Many consumers simply do not understand why the act of transferring music from CDs they own to their MP3 players is illegal (para. 81).

It may be too late. The lack of initiative shown by legislators to remedy ‘unreasonable’ copyright restrictions, married to the ease with which these restrictions can be circumvented, has already given rise to a mass infringement culture, itself generative of consumer disdain for copyright.

The European Union, also too late, is making moves to address the issue. A press release of 3rd January 2008 notes that ‘Europe’s content sector is suffering under ... serious disagreements between stakeholders ... about fundamental issues such as private copying’ (IP/08/05, <http://ec.europa.eu>). The same press release stated that ‘the demand and preferences of 500 million customers are the strongest arguments for achieving new solutions at EU level’. It stops short of recommending a private copying exception, suggesting instead that ‘[t]echnologies that support the management of rights and the fair remuneration of creators in an online environment can be a key enabler for the development of innovative business models’.

The internet is perhaps unique, despite the caveats regarding copyright’s relationship to technological innovation above. Lawrence Lessig characterises its uniqueness in terms of the development of a ‘Read-Write’ culture as distinct from the ‘Read-Only’ culture that prevailed prior to its ubiquity. Where once our interaction with copyrighted material was on the level of passive consumption, the internet and associated technologies have allowed users to engage with and modify copyrighted material in ways and on a scale never before seen. He uses the example of ‘machinima’ and mash-up culture (editing separate audio and visual elements to create something new; or simply editing one or the other). Mash-ups are the logical end-point of a view of copyrighted work as simply ‘content’, in one conception; or as prime

exemplars of the 'standing on the shoulders of giants' relation between copyrighted work and innovations derived therefrom (see www.ted.com/talks/view/id/187).

Neither Napster nor Grokster, the Irish National Library nor Sony, nor the manufacturers of MP3 players or hard-drive recorders were or are disinterested parties in the battle for access to copyrighted content. All, with the exception of the Irish National Library, sought to gain some financial advantage from the exploitation of content. Despite this, the war for access to content has somehow become a moral one. The abject failure of legislation to keep pace with the rapidity of technological advances in the past decade has meant that the public have gained access to technologies which enable them to freely and easily infringe copyright. Knowing that the technology for conveniently copying and sharing content exists, there is an inevitable public backlash when protective fences are thrown up post-hoc, either by content providers or legislators. With reference to Lessig's observation of the disparity between the policing of copyright in the real world and in the tech world, the dogged pursuit of individual infringers has startled and antagonised users. As John Tehranian (2007: 537) observes:

While there may be a vast disparity between what activities the Copyright Act proscribes and what the average American might consider fair or just, a lack of aggressive enforcement has long prevented this fundamental tension from coming to a head in the past. As technology improves, however, enforcement is becoming increasingly practicable (2007: 537).

This law/norm disparity is becoming more and more marked thanks to a combination of legislative lethargy and energetic technological innovation. This makes a mockery of the law. Enforcement seems arbitrary and unfair, coming as it does after the establishment of normative infringing behaviours. Where copyright holders maintain the right of law, they are coming to be seen more and more as aggressors, thanks in no small part to the methods employed to assert those rights. Now that it is common to view copyright holders as aggressive, wealthy monopolists, I find it hard to envisage a future in which the pressure relents on content providers to release their work for exploitation, and to do so more and more cheaply.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Eoin Devereux, *Understanding the Media* (Second Edition)

London: Sage Publications, 2007. 259pp, €29.15 (pbk.) ISBN: 1412929911 ISBN13: 9781412929912

Anthony Quinn

University of Limerick-based sociologist Dr. Eoin Devereux has updated and expanded his popular media studies text book. This new edition, currently on a second reprint, sets out to familiarise students with the types of questions that are asked in the field of media studies.

The underlying framework that Devereux uses gives ‘equal recognition’ to the production, content and audience reception of media texts (p. 33). This is a useful structure in this instance as it ensures that students are presented with a comprehensive sketch of the field of media studies. Devereux draws on disparate case studies which were researched by the author himself, including television series *The Royle Family*, Alan Parker’s film *Angela’s Ashes*, newspaper coverage of poverty in the *Irish Times* and highly original research about Morrissey fans. Although some of these cultural references are slightly outdated and may not be recognised by younger students, the use of well-described examples should easily draw students into engaging with the text.

Devereux skillfully uses these examples as mini ‘strategic research sites’ through which he outlines deeper theoretical concerns (Merton, 1979: 373). For example, the interplay between structure and agency, the use of ideology as a concept and the debates surrounding the ‘glocalisation’ and commercialisation of media are all adequately covered. Additionally, Devereux uses open publishing network *Indymedia* as an interesting example of relatively new topic. This inclusion of *Indymedia* demonstrates how emerging alternatives are challenging commercially-driven media outlets. It is in this example-driven manner that Devereux usefully animates important theoretical debates.

As well as providing original examples, *Understanding the Media* also engages with important studies and texts. The references at the end of each chapter are a good starting point for further reading. So too are the extracts from key texts provided at the end of each of the seven chapters. These were not a feature of the first edition, published in 2003. A comprehensive glossary also provides an easily-accessible reference for common terms that students might come across. The book also gives a decent overview of qualitative tools that are commonly used within the discipline of media studies. It is a valuable introductory text which would be continuously used by media students.

From a pedagogical perspective, the practical exercises at the end of each chapter are strategically designed and would help to encourage reflexive thinking about media. A companion website for the book features hyperlinks to important Sage-pub-

lished journal articles that expand on issues raised in each chapter that might not normally be available to students. However, I would question Devereux's suggestion to students on page 139 to use openly edited Wikipedia as a starting point for scholarly research.

In his introduction, Devereux argues that mass media play a 'central role' in the 'social construction of reality' (p. 14). He succeeds in buttressing this argument in his well-written book. Early media scholar James D. Halloran draws our attention to the importance of asking the 'right questions' (1998: para. 12). This book will help students of media learn this art as they come across television programmes, films, newspapers and on-line content that they consume on a daily basis. This is one for students to own rather than borrow.

Eoin Devereux (ed.), *Media studies: Key issues and debates*

London: Sage Publications 2007. 391pp., €29.15 (pbk.) ISBN: 1412929830 ISBN13: 9781412929837

Anthony Quinn

Eoin Devereux has edited an engaging collection of 16 chapters by a geographically diverse group of authors. In a similar manner to the book reviewed above, the aim here is to cover the three bases of media production, content and reception equally.

Eminent scholar Denis Mc Quail has penned a useful foreword to the book. He writes of the progress made within the field of media studies and says that a 'stage of maturity' has been reached (p. xvii). Nevertheless, he notes a vulnerability to certain developments such as changing technologies and shift of focus that he perceives away from 'communication' as a central concern of inquiry (p. xxii). He also underlines the importance of drawing on other perspectives of knowledge and inquiry, and notes that 'there is no reason to waste time on boundary disputes and none is wasted in the collection that follows'.

Natalie Fenton's contribution succeeds in bridging what she calls the 'mythical divide' between the political economic and cultural studies approaches to the study of media. Her central argument, which sets the tone for the collection, is that both broad methodologies in fact compliment each other. She argues that one-sided treatments of traditional social science dichotomies such as structure and agency and micro and macro approaches are not an adequate way of approaching media studies. Although this in itself is not a new argument, she skillfully analyses reality television format *Big Brother* in this holistic manner.

Amid continued audience segmentation, David Croteau and William Hoynes note in their chapter that the increased ownership of the means of production by audiences and the emergence of the internet as a new medium challenge older claims about the impact of the concentration of ownership. They make a salient conclusion: the importance of small independent producers should not be overestimated. The

slow but sure adaptability of major players to co-opt emerging trends to their own advantage is clear, argue the authors. They combine this observation with points about the realities of the economics of scale and the synergetic strategies used by media conglomerations to sell their products. The result definitely questions some of the technological hype of late.

Greg Philo, of the now fabled Glasgow University Media Group, focuses his chapter on textual approaches to media studies. He makes an important argument about the limited value of text-based analyses that take the production or reception of mass media messages into account. This is principally done via a case study about the news media coverage of the shooting dead of Palestinian boy Mohammed al-Durrah by Israeli soldiers. He concludes by maintaining that we can 'only come to terms adequately with the generation and reproduction of social meanings' through the simultaneous and complex analysis of the processes of production, content and reception (p. 129).

From a media reception perspective, Sonia Livingstone's excellent chapter on young people's use of media draws our attention to the spaces in which content is enjoyed. She argues that a privatised and media-saturated bedroom culture among young people is the result of their increased exclusion from public spaces and the emergence of Beck's risk society. In some cases, this is by controversial technological means such as the 'ultra-sonic youth crowd dispersal system' called the Mosquito. The retreat to the bedroom is conceptualised by Livingstone as a half-way house between control and autonomy. It is a place where the 'rules of engagement' are decided by children rather than adults (p. 315). The media-rich bedrooms of today, replete with Ipod's, DVDs and Xboxes, might be considered to be spaces for the commercialisation of childhood. However, Livingstone finds them to be also places in which separate identities are created, partially through the consumption of media. The chapter is reliably informed by Livingstone's own empirical research on children's and young people's media uses in the form of drawings and extracts from their media use diaries.

Media Studies sets out to equally treat the foci of production, consumption and reception. However, there is a cogent argument being made by scholars that an equal emphasis should no longer be given to this tripartite. The nitty gritty of production may be the place to look. This is a key debate absent from the book. For example, Born makes a strong case for the 'ontological priority of production over consumption' within television studies (2000: 416). More recently, Toynbee makes a strong case for the general primacy of production over content and reception (2008: 269). This is contained in the Hesmondhalgh & Toynbee edited collection that challenges those researching the field to draw on more diverse intellectual resources. While the tripartite approach works in the previous book reviewed, it becomes a weakness in this more in-depth treatment of the media studies field. Indeed, this argument itself seems not to be mentioned.

For newer researchers, the key concepts are clearly outlined at the beginning of each chapter. This should aid students in the process of using these concepts elsewhere. The 'going further' sections reference some useful texts which develop on important themes contained in the chapters. The activities sections should ensure that students genuinely reflect on their own uses of media. This should no doubt provoke analysis and debate in academics. This book develops on important aspects of the field raised in Devereux's own text book. The two works sit well together.

The global appeal of this important collection is reflected in the fact that it will be published later this year in Cantonese.

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REVIEWER

Anthony Quinn, PhD candidate and tutor, School of Media, Dublin Institute of Technology

Mark O'Brien, *The Irish Times: A History*

Dublin: Four Courts Press 2008. 320pp, €35.00 (hbk) ISBN: 978-1-84682-123-3

Harry Browne

Near the end of Mark O'Brien's rich and valuable history of Ireland's 'newspaper of record', there is an unfortunately telling line. Having just detailed some of the financial pressures and management shenanigans that characterised the life of this venerable institution between 1994 and 2007, the author writes: 'But the paper still continued on with its main function – exposing the underbelly of Irish political life to public scrutiny.' (p. 271)

This sentence, in all its benign naivety, can certainly be defended as a harmless literary device, in place to make a transition from discussing the Irish Times as a company to discussing the *Irish Times* as a newspaper, introducing a new section on editorial matters. However, the fact that an excellent media scholar (O'Brien is undoubtedly nothing short of that) can write so confidently and complementarily about the 'main function' of any complex media institution is indicative of a certain analytical laxness that the author has allowed to creep into his work here. (His fine 2001 history of the *Irish Press* was not so hampered.) It is as though O'Brien is compensating, too, for the previous 20 pages of material likely to make an *Irish Times* manager squirm and skip ahead to this reassuring verbal gesture of comfort. ('Look, our main function is not to sell our audience to advertisers, nor even to provide ideological sustenance to a sometimes-uncertain postcolonial Establishment – it's to expose the underbelly etc.')

O'Brien is forced, in fairness, to employ the broad brush often in the interest of approaching his impossible task: to tell the story of 150 years of an important organ-

isation with a complicated internal life, a complex and changing relationship with other loci of power and influence in society, and a daily printed public record of what it considered to be significant locally, nationally and globally, all in fewer than 300 pages. If anything, the author seems too undaunted, skipping easily and rapidly between changes in editor and European wars, boardroom battles and the X Case, circulation worries and literary contributors. (One would happily have read more of James Joyce's 1903 interview with motor-racing driver Henri Fournier, published by the newspaper.) The 19th century gets very short shrift, and with it the subtleties of Irish-British identity in that formative period for the paper: just 17 pages into the book's chronological narrative we have already reached the Boer War, four decades along from the founding of the *Irish Times* (which of course enthusiastically supported the troops).

In the context of this review I should acknowledge that O'Brien also gives short shrift to the criticisms of the paper's political direction (rightward, allegedly) raised by myself and others in recent years: there is one sentence, answered by a long quote from editor Geraldine Kennedy, implicitly endorsed by the author, stating that (1) times have changed and that (2) 'if you're getting it from both sides, you must be doing something right' (p275). It is quite probably not a subject that could or should have been more extensively considered in a book of this nature and length; however, here as elsewhere, the author not only leaves out any deeper analysis, he writes nothing to indicate awareness that there might be anything deeper to analyse.

There is much to praise about this book, of course, including 16 pages of well reproduced black-and-white illustrations – though four Martyn Turner cartoons may qualify as slight overkill on that front. Its real attraction is the level of factual detail O'Brien packs in about the paper's personal, commercial and technical history. The details are not always reliable, however. He writes, for example, that, in order to keep the industrial peace, '[t]he switch from manual to electronic publishing was a slow process and involved journalists using computers to type their content before handing it over to printers who retyped it to arrange the layout and make up the pages'. (p233) In fact, as I recall from my own experience in the early 1990s, the scenario was (somewhat) less absurd: in-house journalists had to use often-ancient manual typewriters to produce copy – management calculating that we would be more likely to accept a transition to high-tech if it meant getting away from the (literal) old bangers. The transition went on to embody further absurdities, but never quite the one O'Brien describes.

O'Brien also mistakenly asserts (p. 232) that the Working & Living supplement appeared on Tuesdays; actually it was Fridays. This is a non-trivial detail if you're paying close attention to the shifting intersection of advertising and editorial concerns: in 1990 it was determined that the best sort of supplement in which to enclose the Friday jobs-advertisements was one devoted to training, education and workplace issues, i.e. Working & Living. Only a little later in the evolution of neoliberalism and of business journalism did the *Irish Times* decide that a business supplement was a more suitable home for the increasingly lucrative recruitment ads. Business took over on Fridays and Working & Living was rebranded as Education & Living on Tuesdays.

Even those not immersed in relatively recent history are likely to find this a slightly frustrating book, one that too rarely pauses for breath. For all its sweep, it also never really paints a coherent 'big picture'. O'Brien asserts at the beginning of

the volume that the *Irish Times* 'is, today, the country's authoritative newspaper of choice' (p. 13), a phrase from which I can derive no useful meaning. And at the end, he asserts still more baldly: 'The *Irish Times* has helped open up and transform Irish society and will continue to do so for many decades to come.' (p. 276) The first half of that sentence is at least debatable, the second half (to the extent that it is more than a piety) is as yet untestable, with both the paper's transformative powers and its indefinitely continued existence in some doubt. The sentence was written, to be sure, before the depth of the crisis engulfing the national and global economies was apparent, but the crisis in newspapers and journalism has been clear for years. One hopes it doesn't prove to be a scholar's unwise hostage to fortune.

REVIEWER

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Walsh, Maurice (2008) *The News from Ireland: Foreign Correspondents and the Irish Revolution*

London: I.B. Taurus, 2008. 250pp, €26.00 (hbk) ISBN: 978-1-84511-714-6.

Nora French

This book is a welcome addition to the small number of scholarly books on the press in Ireland. Walsh gives a critical account of reporting in the foreign press on the Irish War of Independence (1919 to 1921), concentrating on the work of British and American journalists. That the war was determined not by physical means but by the negative press reporting of the British reactions to the Irish revolution is generally accepted; however, prior to this book there was no analysis of the actual reporting. The book examines the day to day practice of journalists at that crucial period in Ireland, relating this analysis to wider issues such colonialism and nationalism on the one hand and to the then emerging theoretical study of journalism on the other.

The historical context in Ireland is sketched, as is the background to the work of the journalists. They had been marked by their experience during the first World War, when they were seen as collaborating with government which had added to earlier doubts about their generally uncritical reporting of colonial issues. The events in Ireland provided them with an opportunity to re-establish their professional independence and their role as neutral, disinterested observers.

The book refers to the worldwide press interest and coverage of the events in Ireland and the consequent bad press for the British government. The detailed analysis, however, concentrates on the work of reporters from Britain and from the US, as well as offering an interesting account of the 'literary tourists' – again from Britain – G.K. Chesterton, Wilfred Ewart and V.S. Pritchett.

The analysis of the British reporting of the war shows that the reporters found Ireland strange and different, yet strictly speaking it was home news for them given

that Ireland was then part of the United Kingdom, not a 'foreign' country as the sub-title of the book implies. Walsh describes their puzzlement at events such as the opening of Dáil Éireann in 1919, the funeral of Terence McSwiney, and the mourning and respect shown by the public at the funerals of the 11 British officers killed in Dublin. He demonstrates the unrelenting criticism that characterised the coverage of the Black and Tans and how it discredited British tactics.

Contrast is drawn between Sinn Féin and Dublin Castle's handling of the press, with Sinn Féin's unlikely activists, Desmond Fitzgerald and Erskine Childers, skillfully making press contacts and providing well judged information for journalists. Dublin Castle's early communications with the press were ineffectual, consisting of comment and propaganda rather than accurate facts and figures. By the time the British got their act together, it was too late and they were unsuccessful in countering or rebutting the Sinn Féin version of events.

Walsh demonstrates how the press reports not only helped form British and international public opinion but were influential within the House of Commons, being quoted in parliamentary debate. He argues that divisions within Parliament on how to respond to the Irish revolution gave great power to the press and it was thus instrumental in determining the government to bring the war to an end.

The chapter on the American journalists is particularly interesting in linking reporting of the war in Ireland to the debates then raging about the nature and practice of journalism. Walsh juxtaposes the portraits of two prominent but highly contrasting journalists, Francis Hackett and Carl Ackerman. Concern at standards in the 'yellow press' in the late nineteenth century had led to attempts to professionalise journalism. In the US, this led to the establishment of university programmes which were to train journalists to act as detached observers, to concentrate on the reporting of facts, to follow a set of defined procedures. Ackerman personified the new breed of professional journalist: he was a graduate of the first year of the journalism programme at Columbia University and an experienced foreign correspondent. Later in his career he was to return to Columbia as first Dean of Journalism, a post he retained for over twenty years. Hackett on the other hand represented the older style of journalism. With no formal training, and with prior experience that included editing a muckraking magazine, he had become a well-established literary journalist. In his view, the role of journalism was not only to investigate facts but to interpret them. Irish by birth and an avowed nationalist, he saw the situation in Ireland in essentially moral terms.

The reports of the two men from Ireland were very different in style, Hackett emotionally involved on the nationalist side, writing literary accounts of the lives of the people and the functioning of Sinn Féin on the ground; Ackerman treating the conflict as similar to those he had reported on elsewhere; seemingly personally detached from events himself, using influential figures as news sources. And yet, it is interesting that through getting close to those in power as recommended in the new style of journalism, he ended up as an actor in the war by adopting the role of mediator between the British and Sinn Féin.

These events were taking place at the time when Walter Lippman was very prominent in American journalism. His ground-breaking book *Public Opinion* was published in 1920, in which his avocation that journalists should model themselves on scientists echoed Ackerman's journalistic creed. Hackett and Lippmann both

worked on the *New Republic* during this time and it is no surprise to learn from Walsh that they clashed repeatedly. It must be said that Walsh seems more critical of Ackerman's new style of journalism with its tendency to arid conformity compared with the more romantic, opinionated and literary style of Hackett. This is borne out by his inclusion in the following chapter of the Irish experiences of the three 'literary tourists' who were not reporting day to day events but linking their observations on the Irish situation to wider themes relevant to themselves and to world-wide changes after the Great War.

With journalism under-researched in Ireland, it is very good to see a study such as this. Walsh's experience as a foreign correspondent provided him with a strong professional basis for analysing the practice of journalists during the War of Independence and he situates the research in the wider international context of politics, colonialism and journalism theory.

REVIEWER

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Alan Grossman & Áine O'Brien (eds), *Projecting Migration: Transcultural Documentary Practice*

London: Wallflower Press, 2008. 256pp., £29.95 (Pbk + DVD) ISBN 978-1-905674-04-6.

Gavan Titley

In the short story by Marc Matthews which loops through Roshini Kempadoo's multimedia restoration of the disavowed Caribbean to the story of western modernity, the opening tells of how

Was bout two week befoe Nennan Tooky mek wan hundred and twenty five year when double great grandson Benjamin Parsons, wha ah teach university is, he bring a white man, an one set a tape recorder, camera and ting, say how they want ole time story.

Projecting Migration unites contributors adept at setting up *tings* in search of stories, yet they are stories shaped by a rejection of such proprietary ethnographies. Grossman and O'Brien's excellent volume provides a platform for studies that range expansively across modalities and contexts of migrant experience by challenging conventional understandings of how 'documentary' can navigate the burden of representing subaltern experiences. This expansiveness is anchored in recurring questions concerning the politics and possibilities of representations, the ethics and unintended consequences of intimate involvement in the lives and complex networks of people who migrate, and unsettling power geometries of mobility and immobility.

The eleven chapters feature theoretical and personal reflections on the production of 'media practice interventions' (p. 4) accompanied by a DVD of audio-visual references. As Hamid Naficy rightly points out in the foreword, the inclusion of the DVD "...solves the problematic of quotation; but goes beyond that" (p. xiii) by compelling a reading experience where the featured material cannot be restricted to the supporting role of quotations. Almost as a variation on one of the volume's sub-themes – the spatio-temporal contingencies of knowledge – the varying multimedia references invite different modes of reading, and thus different ways of moving through the 'book'.

From the title onwards, the editors take a welcome scalpel to the disciplinary preciousness which often separates the study of 'migration' from considerations of transnationalism, multiculturalism and the situated politics of difference. The contributors respond in kind – the practice-based studies encompass lives lived negotiating the multi-layered socio-political space of borders; movement, dislocation and trauma; identity, legitimacy and belonging; families, family networks and the particular experiences of children as mediators and translators.

The multivalent experiences of migrants imply a concomitant expansiveness in documentary practice, stemming, as Gordon Quinn contests in the interview-based chapter on *The New Americans*, from an '... appreciation of immigrants as complicated and contradictory human beings' (p. 91). For the editors there are key affinities between the critical possibilities of documentary projection and the political imperatives of projecting migration's human complexities:

... the research application of still, moving image and sound technologies can adequately frame the material conditions and contingencies, motivations and transnational affiliations shaping the everyday lived reality of migrants, their families and extended communities (p. 3).

Technologies, of course, are never just applied, and the constant tension the editors identify between 'seeing' and 'constructing' primes a hugely interesting series of struggles with what constitutes 'adequate framing'. An important dimension of adequacy flagged in the introduction is the ability of documentary practice to integrate micro and macro analyses of 'everyday life' – an integration of fundamental political importance in considerations of migration, yet one frequently undercut in mainstream documentary by generic attraction and ideological reduction to the individualised narrative. In this post-Benjamin Parsons formation there are no individualised narratives; the narrators are always present and implicated, often troubled by their constitutiveness.

As Lawrence Taylor points out in his essay 'Picturing the Tunnel Kids', knowledge of 'the other' is always mediated, and the challenge for a committed documentary practice is to make manifest the implications of mediation, and to find ways of representing the voice of others with fidelity in an unequal relationship of symbolic and material power. These tensions between the creative, the structural and the political are engaged with keen ethical intent in many of the pieces, from discussions of the limits of reflexivity to often neglected reflections on the sublimated genealogy of archives. Rodgers and Spitz's reflection on their video messaging project at the Mozambique/South Africa border is possibly the most illuminating in this

regard, perhaps because it carries the heaviest baggage. The frank acceptance that their anti-colonial practice remains inescapably colonial in practice (p. 32) contrasts with the occasional willingness in a minority of contributions to engage in cultural studies heroics about the transformational possibilities of 'my practice'.

A degree of unity often lacking in edited volumes is provided by the interplay between the claims made for documentary practice in the introduction, and their situated negotiation in the studies. Several studies highlight the impact of commodification on 'adequate framing'; in two rounds of circulating video messages, the footage shot by Rodgers and Spitz shifts from family communiques/research data to family communiques/ funded broadcast material, a shift which subsequently risks transposing the Big Brother confessional onto the heartworn dramas of family relationships frayed by the not so hidden injuries of the border regime. Similarly Browne and Onyejelem's book/radio project *Home from Home*, where the desire to mediate the life stories of migrants - and their heuristic insights into hegemonic social relations - must reckon with the publisher's vision of what they signify 'about Ireland' (by all means give them voices, as long as they are saying something about 'us').

Yet the exigencies imposed on critical practice by commodification are not straightforward, and for producers of the epic series *The New Americans*, it is precisely by not conceding aesthetic and narrative possibilities to fiction film that the potential of documentary practice to engage experiences of migration is enhanced. For other contributors the process of 'thinking through and with sounds and images' (p. 3) means eliding the generic constraints of realism in favour of modes of representation capable of disturbing conventional arrangements of the real and the historical. Thus in Kempadoo's *Back Routes* it is only by including the fictional voices quoted in opening that the constitutive disavowal of the Caribbean can return to disconcert Europe's ahistorical self-love.

There is a reluctance to theorise race in some studies otherwise committed to intervening in hegemonic discourses of representation, an omission striking precisely because the shifting discursive properties of racialisation probe the possibilities of critical practice. Nevertheless this challenging and painstakingly assembled project is required reading for anyone interested in its richly elaborated themes.

REVIEWER

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